



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORT

DATE: November 7, 2018

TO: Hearing Officer

SUBJECT: Sign Exception #11894

LOCATION: 39 Congress Street

APPLICANT: Anthony J. Palazzola, Inc.

ZONING DESIGNATION: IG-SP2 (Industrial General – South Fair Oaks Specific Plan)

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Medium Mixed-Use

CASE PLANNER: Jamie Peltier

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the Environmental Determination and the Specific Findings in Attachment A to **approve** Sign Exception #11894 with the conditions in Attachment B.

PROJECT PROPOSAL: Sign Exception: To allow the following applications for three wall signs to exceed the maximum height for a wall sign, as follows:

1. Sign Exception: to allow a wall sign on the east elevation (private driveway) of the building to be placed at a height of approximately 40 feet, where wall signs are permitted to be placed at a maximum height of 25 feet, or below the second story window, whichever is lower;
2. Sign Exception: to allow a wall sign on the south elevation (Congress Street) of the building to be placed at a height of approximately 40 feet, where wall signs are permitted to be placed at a maximum height of 25 feet, or below the second story window, whichever is lower; and

3. Sign Exception: to allow a wall sign on the west elevation (Fairmount Avenue) of the building to be placed at a height of approximately 40 feet, where wall signs are permitted to be placed at a maximum height of 25 feet, or below the second story window, whichever is lower.

A Sign Exception is required for a sign that deviates from the maximum allowable height. The request also includes locating the east and west side wall signs at the southernmost edge of the building, where wall signs shall otherwise be located within the middle 70% of the building. A Sign Exception is required to deviate from Zoning Code regulations governing height and a Zoning Administrator's approval is required to deviate from the Zoning Code regulations governing the horizontal location of a wall sign.

**ENVIRONMENTAL
DETERMINATION:**

This project has been determined to be exempt from environmental review pursuant to the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §21080(b)(9); Administrative Code, Title 14, Chapter 3, § 15311 (Class 11, Accessory Structures) and there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class; therefore, there are no unusual circumstances. This section specifically applies to the construction or replacement of minor structures such as onsite signs.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The applicant, Anthony J. Palazzola, Inc., has submitted a Sign Exception application on behalf of Huntington Orthopedic Institute to allow for three 48 square-foot wall signs consisting of individual, halo-lit, illuminated, reverse channel letters with the words "Huntington Orthopedic Institute" and a logo to be installed above the lowest second story windows. The signs would be located on the east elevation of the building fronting an on-site private driveway, on the south elevation fronting Congress Street, and on the west elevation fronting Fairmount Avenue. Per Zoning Code Section 17.48.090.D.1 (Table 4-21 — CL, CG, and IG Zoning District Sign Standards), wall signs are permitted to be placed at a maximum height of 25 feet, or below the second story window, whichever is lower. The proposed wall signs would be installed above second story windows and a Sign Exception is required to allow a wall sign to deviate from an applicable development requirement.

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

On October 17, 2018, the Hearing Officer considered at its regularly noticed hearing, Sign Exception #11894. The request was to allow for three wall signs to exceed the maximum height for a wall sign, where the maximum height is 25 feet, or below the second story window, whichever is lower. Staff's recommendation to the Hearing Officer was to approve the application, as staff was able to make the findings to support the request.

At the conclusion of the meeting, and after hearing public testimony, the Hearing Officer decided to continue the item to the November 7, 2018 hearing to allow the applicant and opposing party an opportunity to consider alternatives to the proposed signs.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed Sign Exceptions would permit the placement of three wall signs at a location higher than allowed and outside the middle 70-percent of the building façades. In consideration of the context of signage in the IG-SP2 zoning district, staff is recommending conditions of approval, which would ensure that the sign is compatible with other signage within the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan area. There are no changed circumstances from the staff report presented at the hearing on October 17, 2018, therefore, staff recommends that the Hearing Officer approve the application with the findings in Attachment A and the Conditions of Approval in Attachment B.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Specific Findings for Approval

Attachment B: Conditions of Approval

ATTACHMENT A
FINDINGS FOR SIGN EXCEPTION #11894

Sign Exception - To allow a Business Identification Wall Sign on the south elevation (Congress Street) of the building with a height of 40 feet, where the maximum permitted height for a wall sign is 25 feet or below the bottom of the second story window, whichever is lower.

1. *The proposed sign is architecturally and aesthetically compatible with the major structures on the subject site and the adjacent sites and is compatible with the character of the established neighborhood and general environment.* Approval of the Sign Exception will allow the sign to be located at a position that is more visible to patrons of the business from multiple streets. The medical building on the property is a three-story commercial office building with a style that fits modestly into its built environment. The proposed sign will be the one sign for the business facing Congress Street. This is a case where a prominent, attractive sign will enhance the character of the building and promote economic activity. Strict adherence with the requirements for the wall sign would limit the vertical height of the sign to below the second story window and would greatly limit the visibility of the sign to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The design of the building provides a logical area for the sign above the third-floor windows on the south elevation, whereas locating the sign below the second story windows would be disjointed from the overall design. Thus, it is an aesthetic improvement to locate the sign above the windows, and it will enhance the readability of the sign with an appropriate location and size.

2. *Granting the application is in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan and the purpose and intent of any applicable specific plan, and the purposes of this Zoning Code and would not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations on other properties in the vicinity and the same zoning district.* The proposed Sign Exception is in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan, the purpose and intent of the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan, and the purposes of this Zoning Code. The proposed sign would not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations on other properties in the vicinity and the same zoning district in that the intent of the Sign Ordinance is to maintain and enhance the quality of a sign in the City, which this sign accomplishes. Granting the Sign Exception would be consistent with General Plan Land Use Element Policy: 4.11 (Development that is Compatible) and Policy 37.2 (Medical Supporting Uses) by encouraging targeted development of medical businesses and uses in an aesthetically compatible manner to promote Pasadena as a center of such activities in the region.

3. *Granting the application would not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity of the subject site, or to the public health, safety, or general welfare.* The Sign Exception application has been reviewed by the Building Division, Public Works Department, and Department of Transportation. There were no concerns expressed regarding the safety of the sign. The sign will be subject to the City's plan check process where it will be required to be designed and installed in compliance with building and safety code requirements.

Sign Exception - To allow a Business Identification Wall Sign on the east elevation (driveway) of the building with a height of 40 feet, where the maximum permitted height for a wall sign is 25 feet or below the bottom of the second story window, whichever is lower.

1. *The proposed sign is architecturally and aesthetically compatible with the major structures on the subject site and the adjacent sites and is compatible with the character of the established neighborhood and general environment.* Approval of the Sign Exception will allow the sign to be located at a position that is more visible to patrons of the business from Congress Street, but also Fair Oaks Avenue, which is the main thoroughfare through the medical use corridor. The medical building on the property is a three-story commercial office building with a style that fits modestly into its environment. The proposed sign will be the one sign for the business facing the driveway. Strict adherence with the requirements for the wall sign would limit the vertical height of the sign to below the second story window and would greatly limit the visibility of the sign to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The proposed location will promote visibility from vehicular activity from Fair Oaks Avenue and will enhance the character of the building to promote economic activity. If the sign were to be located with strict adherence to the height requirements, it would not be visible from the surrounding streets due to the sign being blocked by the architectural projection extending over the garage entry. The proposed location is an aesthetic improvement, as it will enhance the readability of the sign at an appropriate height, location, and size.
2. *Granting the application is in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan and the purpose and intent of any applicable specific plan, and the purposes of this Zoning Code and would not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations on other properties in the vicinity and the same zoning district.* The proposed Sign Exception is in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan, the purpose and intent of the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan, and the purposes of this Zoning Code. The proposed sign would not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations on other properties in the vicinity and the same zoning district in that the intent of the Sign Ordinance is to maintain and enhance the quality of a sign in the City, which this sign accomplishes. Granting the Sign Exception would be consistent with General Plan Land Use Element Policy: 4.11 (Development that is Compatible) and Policy 37.2 (Medical Supporting Uses) by encouraging targeted development of medical businesses and uses in an aesthetically compatible manner to promote Pasadena as a center of such activities in the region.
3. *Granting the application would not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity of the subject site, or to the public health, safety, or general welfare.* The Sign Exception application has been reviewed by the Building Division, Public Works Department, and Department of Transportation. There were no concerns expressed regarding the safety of the sign. The sign will be subject to the City's plan check process where it will be required to be designed and installed in compliance with building and safety code requirements.

Sign Exception - To allow a Business Identification Wall Sign on the west elevation (Fairmount Avenue) of the building with a height of 40 feet, where the maximum permitted height for a wall sign is 25 feet or below the bottom of the second story window, whichever is lower.

1. *The proposed sign is architecturally and aesthetically compatible with the major structures on the subject site and the adjacent sites and is compatible with the character of the established neighborhood and general environment.* Approval of the Sign Exception will allow the sign to be located at a position that is more visible to patrons of the business at different street perspectives. The proposed sign will be the one sign for the business facing Fairmount Avenue. Strict adherence with the requirements for the wall sign would limit the vertical height of the sign to 25 feet. The proposed location increases the visibility of the sign to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic from travelers moving east on Congress Street and north and south on Fairmount Avenue. The design of the building provides a logical area for the sign above the third-floor windows on the west elevation, whereas locating the sign below the second story windows would be disjointed from the overall design. The proposed location is an aesthetic improvement, as it will enhance the readability of the sign at an appropriate height, location, and size.
2. *Granting the application is in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan and the purpose and intent of any applicable specific plan, and the purposes of this Zoning Code and would not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations on other properties in the vicinity and the same zoning district.* The proposed Sign Exception is in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan, the purpose and intent of the South Fair Oaks Specific Plan, and the purposes of this Zoning Code. The proposed sign would not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations on other properties in the vicinity and the same zoning district in that the intent of the Sign Ordinance is to maintain and enhance the quality of a sign in the City, which this sign accomplishes. Granting the Sign Exception would be consistent with General Plan Land Use Element Policy: 4.11 (Development that is Compatible) and Policy 37.2 (Medical Supporting Uses) by encouraging targeted development of medical businesses and uses in an aesthetically compatible manner to promote Pasadena as a center of such activities in the region.
3. *Granting the application would not be detrimental or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity of the subject site, or to the public health, safety, or general welfare.* The Sign Exception application has been reviewed by the Building Division, Public Works Department, and Department of Transportation. There were no concerns expressed regarding the safety of the sign. The sign will be subject to the City's plan check process where it will be required to be designed and installed in compliance with building and safety code requirements.

ATTACHMENT B
CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL FOR SIGN EXCEPTION #11894

The applicant or successor in interest shall meet the following conditions:

General

1. The site plan and elevations submitted for building permits shall substantially conform to the plans submitted with this application labeled "Approved at Hearing November 7, 2018," except as modified herein.
2. The applicant or successor in interest shall meet the applicable code requirements of all other City Departments. The applicant shall submit building plans for approval prior to the installation of the sign
3. The Decision Letter and Conditions of Approval shall be incorporated into the submitted building plans as part of the Plan Check process.
4. This approval is for a Sign Exception to allow the proposed wall signs to exceed the maximum wall sign height and location requirements. The wall signs shall have a maximum sign height of 40 feet to the top of the sign, as measured from existing grade, as depicted in the approved plans. The signs on the east and west elevations (secondary frontages) will be located at the southernmost edge of their respective elevation and outside the middle 70-percent of the building façade, as depicted in the approved plans.
5. The proposed project, Activity Number **PLN2018-00379**, is subject to a Final Zoning Inspection. The Final Zoning Inspection is required for the project prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. Contact Jamie Peltier at jpeltier@cityofpasadena.net or (626) 744-7096 to schedule an inspection appointment time.
6. In accordance with Section 17.64.040 of the Pasadena Municipal Code, the exercise of the right granted under this application must be commenced within three years of the effective date of the approval. This approval is eligible for two one-year extensions. Each one-year extension is required to be reviewed and approved by the Hearing Officer at a noticed public hearing. In order for a project to be eligible for a time extension, the applicant is required to submit the required fee and time extension application to the Permit Center prior to the expiration date of the land use entitlement. The right granted by this approval may be revoked if the entitlement is exercised contrary to the conditions of approval or if it is exercised in violation of the Zoning Code.

Planning

7. Any future alterations to the signage that is not part of this Sign Exception shall require the modification of this Sign Exception or a new Sign Exception.
8. The wall signs shall not exceed 48 square-feet, 13'-4 ½" x 3'-7", with a depth of not more than 4 ½" from the building.
9. The sign heights shall not exceed 40 feet to the top of the signs.