



**PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**STAFF REPORT**

**DATE:** November 6, 2019

**TO:** Hearing Officer

**SUBJECT:** Sign Exception #11909

**LOCATION:** 1095 E. Colorado Boulevard

**APPLICANT:** Linda Thompson courtesy of Cree Industrial Arts on behalf of *Caliber Collision*

**ZONING DESIGNATION:** ECSP-CG-1-AD-2 (East Colorado Specific Plan, Commercial General District 1, Alcohol District Overlay)

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION:** Medium Mixed Use

**CASE PLANNER:** Katherine Moran

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Adopt the Environmental Determination and Specific Findings in Attachment A to **approve** Sign Exception #11909 with the conditions in Attachment B

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

1. Sign Exception: to allow a wall sign on the south elevation (East Colorado Boulevard) of the building to be placed at a height of approximately 33.5 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 west elevation (North Wilson Avenue) of the building to be placed at a height of approximately 33.5 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.

**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 that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class and, therefore, there are no unusual circumstances. This section specifically applies to the construction or replacement of minor structures such as onsite signs.

**BACKGROUND:**

**Site characteristics:** The subject site is located on the southwest corner of North Wilson Avenue and East Colorado Boulevard. The subject site is a rectangular 24,243 square-foot lot developed with a 4,400-square-foot commercial building.

**Adjacent Uses:** North: Commercial  
South: Commercial  
East: Commercial/Auto Service  
West: Commercial/Office

**Adjacent Zoning:** North: RM-48-PK (Residential Multi-Family, 0-48 units per acre and Parking Overlay District)  
South: ECSP-CG-1-AD-2 (East Colorado Specific Plan)  
East: ECSP-CG-1-AD-2 (East Colorado Specific Plan)  
West: ECSP-CG-1-AD-2 (East Colorado Specific Plan)

**Previous Cases:** None

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

The applicant, Linda Thompson of Cree Industrial Arts, has submitted a Sign Exception application on behalf of Caliber Collision to allow for two 77 square-foot wall signs to be installed above 25 feet. The signs would be located on the south elevation fronting East Colorado Boulevard and on the west elevation of the building fronting North Wilson 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 the maximum allowed 25-foot height limit and a Sign Exception is required to allow a wall sign to deviate from an applicable development requirement.

The subject site is a rectangular shaped lot with approximately 100 feet of street frontage on East Colorado Boulevard and approximately 156 feet of street frontage along North Wilson Avenue. The project site is bounded on the east by another automotive use and to the north by Rhodes Alley. The property is developed with a 4,400-square foot two-story building.

The proposed wall sign specifications are the same for the two signs consisting of individual, internally illuminated, reverse, channel letters with the words “Caliber Collision” underlined by a multi-colored strip. Each sign would be 24’-4” x 3’-2”, with a depth of 5 inches, for a sign area of approximately 77 square feet.

The individual letters would be acrylic faced with white channel LED illumination, and affixed to the wall with 5-inch metal bolts encased with a 3-inch back stud spacer. The trim caps and returns

would match in color (black paint). Conduit to electrify the sign would be run on the interior of the building wall, and would not be visible from the street. The proposed signs, as conditioned, would be architecturally and aesthetically compatible with the historic building on the subject site, is harmonious with the character of the Specific Plan, and consistent with the general surroundings.

The existing two-story Kindel Building (Caliber Collision building) was constructed in 1927 and is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The building was built by Bennett and Haskell for James Kindel as an auto dealership.

### **ANALYSIS:**

A “wall sign” is defined as a sign that is attached to or painted on the exterior wall of a structure with the display surface of the sign approximately parallel to the building wall. Wall signs are a permitted sign type in ECSP-CG-1-AD-2 (East Colorado Specific Plan, Commercial General District 1, Alcohol District Overlay) zoning district and may be placed at a height or location outside the area permitted under the Zoning Code subject to the review and approval of a Sign Exception or a Zoning Administrator’s approval.

The purpose of the City’s sign ordinance is to provide standards for signs to safeguard life, health, property, safety, and public welfare, while encouraging compatibility, creativity, variety, and enhancement of the City’s visual image and economic activity. The sign standards are designed to provide each sign user an opportunity for effective identification by regulating the number, size, location and height according to standards consistent with each zoning district. However, not all buildings are designed to accommodate the sign standards set forth in the zoning code. In these cases, a Sign Exception may be granted to allow proposed signage to deviate from certain development standards due to unique, historical, and/or architectural features associated with existing buildings. A Sign Exception is a form of a Minor Variance, which allows the deviation from the specific sign standards. A Sign Exception may be approved provided all required findings identified in Attachment A of this report are met.

Per Section 17.48.110.H.5, the Zoning Administrator may allow for a sign to deviate from the “middle 70%” With the exception of the requested Sign Exceptions for height, the proposed wall signs comply with the remainder of the applicable standards contained in Section 17.48.110.H (Wall Signs). Such standards include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Not exceeding the maximum number of signs of two signs per ground floor occupancy per frontage;
- (2) Not extending above an eave or parapet;
- (3) Being comprised of individual channel letters that are externally illuminated;
- (4) Having no exposed raceways;
- (5) Not projecting more than 12 inches from the wall;
- (6) Not blocking any windows or architectural features; and
- (7) Not exceeding the sign area (1.5 square feet per foot of a building per primary or secondary building frontage).

Additionally, the proposed wall signs comply with the illumination requirements in Section 17.48.100.D that apply to all signage.

Sign Exception – To allow two Business Identification Wall Signs to be placed at a height of approximately 33.5 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.

Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.48.090.D.1, wall signs are permitted on building elevations that have frontages that abut a street, alley, driveway, parking area, or pedestrian plaza, courtyard, or arcade on the same site. Each building shall have one elevation designated as the primary building frontage and remaining elevations are designated secondary building frontages. In addition, wall signs are permitted to be placed at a maximum height of 25 feet or below the second story window, whichever is lower.

Caliber Collision is the only tenant that occupies the approximately 35-foot tall, double-story building. The building has two building elevations containing frontages which each abut a street (East Colorado Boulevard and North Wilson Street), and a third building elevation with a frontage abutting the building's parking lot to the east. A third wall sign on the east elevation is included in the project plans which does not require a Sign Exception request, but would be located outside of the middle 70 percent of the building frontage for better traffic visibility from East Colorado Boulevard.

East Colorado Boulevard is the designated primary building frontage (south elevation) and the North Wilson elevation (west elevation) would be the designated secondary building frontage. Each elevation would have a wall sign placed at a height of approximately 33.5 feet. The signs would be located on the historic façades, above the double-height store-front windows, on the entablature between the cornice and the parapet without obstructing the architectural features. The proposed locations which exceed the maximum height of 25 feet and would not be in compliance with the height requirement.

The primary building frontage (south elevation) is 35 feet tall and has a linear length of 100 feet. The historic frontage features the storefront's entry and four double-height arched windows, each approximately 20 feet tall, expanding the entire length of the frontage. Above the entry and double-height windows is an entablature comprised of the decorative cornice and parapet spanning the entire width of the facade. The applicant proposes to place a wall sign on the uppermost area of this façade, at a height of 33.5 feet, between these historic architectural features. The sign's location would provide optimal visibility for vehicles and pedestrians.

The secondary building frontage (west elevation) is also 35 feet tall and has a linear length of 156 feet. The façade features the business's service bays for the automotive repair garage at the northern plane of the elevation and the same historic double-height arched windows near the corner of East Colorado Boulevard and North Wilson Avenue. The second sign would be positioned above the double-height windows, with an overall height of approximately 33.5 feet from the ground, without obstructing architectural features. The proposed sign would be located at the southernmost end of the west elevation facing North Wilson Avenue. The wall sign would be visible to traffic traveling north and south on North Wilson Avenue and traveling east on East Colorado Boulevard.

#### **GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:**

The proposed Sign Exceptions are in conformance with the goals, policies, and objectives of the General Plan, the purpose and intent of the East Colorado Specific Plan, and the purposes of this Zoning Code. The proposed signs 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 these signs accomplish. Granting the Sign Exceptions would be consistent with General Plan Land Use Element *Policy 4.11 - Development that is Compatible* and Land Use Element *Policy 11.1, Business Expansion and Growth*, which supports the growth and success of businesses that create new job opportunities and productive and satisfying employment for Pasadena residents.

In addition, the project is also compatible with Land Use Element *Policy 11.3 - New and Complementary Businesses* by encouraging targeted development of automotive businesses and uses in an aesthetically compatible manner to promote Pasadena as a center of such activities in the region. It would bolster a diverse economy base and would be a long-term economic contribution to the City and CG zoning district which encourages a full range of retail and service businesses.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

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.

#### **REVIEW BY OTHER CITY DEPARTMENTS:**

This Sign Exception application has been reviewed by the Design and Historic Preservation Division, Public Works Department, Building Division, and Department of Transportation. There were no concerns expressed. The Design and Historic Preservation Section has provided a list of comments that are incorporated in Attachment B of this report as recommended conditions of approval. The signs would be subject to the City's plan check process where they would be required to be designed and installed in compliance with building and safety code requirements.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The proposed Sign Exception would permit the placement of two wall signs at locations exceeding the maximum allowed height requirement. In consideration of the context of signage in the ECSP-CG-1-AD-2 zoning district, staff is recommending conditions of approval, which would ensure that the signs are compatible with other signage within the East Colorado Specific Plan area. 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: Recommended Specific Findings

Attachment B: Recommended Conditions of Approval

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**SPECIFIC FINDINGS FOR SIGN EXCEPTION #11909**

Sign Exception - To allow a Business Identification Wall Sign on the south elevation (East Colorado Boulevard) of the building with a height of approximately 33.5 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 does not obstruct building's historic architectural features. The existing two-story Kindel Building was constructed in 1927 and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The building on the property is a two-story automotive repair building with a style that fits modestly into its built environment. The proposed sign will be the one sign for the business facing East Colorado Boulevard. This elevation features the building storefront's entry and the prominent sign will be centered above the entry enhancing the character of the building and promoting 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 force obstruction of the building's architectural features while greatly limiting the visibility of the sign to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The design of the building's south elevation provides a logical area for the sign above the second-floor windows on the historic entablature, 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 East Colorado 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 Exceptions would be consistent with General Plan Land Use Element *Policy 4.11 - Development that is Compatible* and Land Use Element *Policy 11.1, Business Expansion and Growth*, which supports the growth and success of businesses that create new job opportunities and productive and satisfying employment for Pasadena residents. In addition, the project is also compatible with Land Use Element *Policy 11.3 - New and Complementary Businesses* by encouraging targeted development of automotive businesses and uses in an aesthetically compatible manner to promote Pasadena as a center of such activities in the region. It would bolster a diverse economy base and would be a long-term economic contribution to the City and CG zoning district which encourages a full range of retail and service businesses.

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 (North Wilson Avenue) of the building with a height of approximately 33.5 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 which does not obstruct the building's historic architectural features. The existing two-story Kindel Building was constructed in 1927 and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The building on the property is a two-story automotive repair building with a style that fits modestly into its built environment. The proposed sign will be the one sign for the business facing North Wilson Avenue. The façade features the business's service bays for the automotive repair garage at the corner of North Wilson Avenue and Rhodes Alley and the same historic double-height arched windows at the corner of East Colorado Boulevard and North Wilson Avenue. The second sign would be positioned above the double-height windows, without obstructing any architectural features. 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 force obstruction of the building's architectural features while greatly limiting the visibility of the sign to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The design of the building's west elevation provides a logical area for the sign above the second-floor windows on the historic entablature, 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 East Colorado 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 Exceptions would be consistent with General Plan Land Use Element *Policy 4.11 - Development that is Compatible* and Land Use Element *Policy 11.1, Business Expansion and Growth*, which supports the growth and success of businesses that create new job opportunities and productive and satisfying employment for Pasadena residents. In addition, the project is also compatible with Land Use Element *Policy 11.3 - New and Complementary*

*Businesses* by encouraging targeted development of automotive businesses and uses in an aesthetically compatible manner to promote Pasadena as a center of such activities in the region. It would bolster a diverse economy base and would be a long-term economic contribution to the City and CG zoning district which encourages a full range of retail and service businesses.

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 #11909**

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 6, 2019," 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 33.5 feet to the top of the sign, as measured from existing grade, as depicted in the approved plans. The sign on the west elevation (secondary frontage) will be located at the southernmost edge of its respective elevation.
5. The proposed project, Activity Number **PLN2019-00345**, 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 Katherine Moran at kmoran@cityofpasadena.net or (626) 744-6740 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 77 square-feet, 24'-4" x 3'-2", with a depth of not more than 5" from the building.
9. The sign heights shall not exceed 33.5 feet to the top of the signs.

10. Prior to the issuance of building permits for the proposed signs, approval shall be obtained from the Zoning Administrator to locate the sign on the west elevation to be outside of the middle 70 percent of the building façade, as allowed in Section 17.48.110.H. of the Zoning Code.

Design and Historic Preservation

11. Remove all attachment and structural elements that supported previous signage.
12. All affected building surfaces shall be restored to match the adjacent building surfaces.