



## PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

### STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** AUGUST 11, 2020

**TO:** DESIGN COMMISSION

**FROM:** DAVID M. REYES, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**SUBJECT:** APPLICATION FOR CONSOLIDATED DESIGN REVIEW  
NEW ILLUMINATED BUILDING IDENTIFICATION SIGN (UBS)  
251 SOUTH LAKE AVENUE

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#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Design Commission:

#### **Environmental Determination**

Find that the application for Consolidated Design Review is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15311, Class 11 pertaining to accessory structures which includes the construction of signs for existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities, and that there are no features that distinguish this project from others in the exempt class; therefore, there are no unusual circumstances.

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

Acknowledge that no protected trees are proposed to be removed in conjunction with this application.

#### **Findings for Consolidated Design Approval**

1. Find that, upon implementation of the condition of approval, the proposed project will comply with the design related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan, and the Sign Design Guidelines; and,
2. Based on these findings, approve the application for Consolidated Design Review as illustrated in Attachment A, subject to the following conditions, which shall be subject to staff review and approval prior to issuance of a building permit:

**Condition:**

The electrical conduit shall be painted to match the color of the parapet wall, and shall be attached directly to the face and top edges of the parapet wall with no gaps, and in the two locations indicated in the proposed plans.

**BACKGROUND:**

**Project Overview**

- General Plan Designation: High Mixed-Use
- Zoning: CD-5 (Central District Specific Plan; Lake Avenue Sub-district)
- Design Guidelines: The applicable design guidelines are the design related goals and policies of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, the Design Guidelines in the Central District Specific Plan, and the Sign Design Guidelines.
- Site: The proposed sign will be located at the top of the northwest edge of the existing 10-story, approximately 140-foot tall office building. The building is located on the west side of South Lake Avenue, south of Cordova Street and north of East Del Mar Boulevard.
- Surroundings: The surrounding land uses consist primarily of office, retail, and multi-family residential uses in buildings of varying heights, styles, and ages. The building is the south tower to a commercial office complex overlooking an elevated courtyard plaza that opens onto South Lake Avenue. The courtyard plaza is fronted by two additional office tower buildings to the north and west. The subject office tower was constructed in 1970 and was developed to mirror the north office building tower (201 S. Lake Ave.) that was constructed in 1965, creating the elevated courtyard plaza. Both office towers were designed in the Mid-Century Modern style by architect William Pereira. The building is rectangular in plan, with its long facades facing north and south, and supported by a ground-floor colonnade that is infilled with storefront glazing. All four facades of the office tower feature a repetitious pattern of rectangular windows inset between vertical fins that run uninterrupted from the third floor to the bottom of the parapet wall.
- Project Description: The applicant is proposing to install a 26.25 square-foot internally illuminated channel letter sign at the 48-inch high, north-facing parapet wall of the office tower building. The new sign is proposed to be installed 68 inches from the northeast corner of the parapet and centered above the building's iconic vertical façade fins. The new sign is proposed to consist of a corporate key logo, 36 inches in height and 33 inches wide, consisting of black aluminum returns, and black plexifaces that will illuminate as white during the night. To the west of the key logo are proposed individual channel letters spelling out "UBS," at 65 inches in width, and 25 inches in height. The individual channel letters are proposed to be composed of red translucent vinyl faces, and red aluminum returns. Both the logo and the individual channel letters are proposed to be five inches in depth, and are proposed to be mounted to a 36" high x 103" long x 5" deep raceway that is proposed to be painted to match the façade.

- Property Owner: 251 South Lake Avenue.
- Designer: Marissa Alvarado, B.K. Signs Incorporated

### **ANALYSIS:**

The proposed sign is a high-quality sign that will be placed in an off-center location that is consistent with the location of the existing building identification sign located on the northerly office tower building. The applicant has worked with staff to adjust the signage location to be centered above the building's vertical façade fins, in accordance with the design guidelines for sign placement to be respectful of the building's architectural features.

Pursuant to PMC Section 17.48.090(C), Table 4-20, Part 4, building identification signs are allowed in the Central District provided that the building is greater than 75 feet in height, that the sign be located below the roof or parapet, and that a maximum of one building identification sign be located per wall plane with a maximum sign area allowance of one square-foot per foot of primary frontage or 100 square feet maximum. The north façade plane of the building measures at approximately 217 feet in length, and the applicant is proposing one 26.25 square-foot sign including the proposed raceway, in compliance with this provision of the Code.

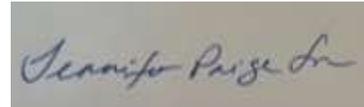
The design of the proposed sign includes a raceway that is proposed to be directly mounted to the concrete 48-inch high parapet wall of the building, with the electrical conduit running from two locations at the top of the raceway, up and over the top of the parapet wall and into electrical supply located on the building's roof. The building identification sign at the northerly office tower building is illuminated in a similar fashion. This method of illumination is necessary to avoid destructive drilling in the thick concrete parapet wall. To ensure adequate concealment of the electrical conduit, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring it to be painted to match the color of the parapet wall, and be attached directly to the face and top of the wall with no gaps and only at the two locations identified in the plans.

Overall, the location of the sign respects the architectural detailing of the building and is aesthetically appropriate and compatible with the overall building design, providing visibility from the South Lake Avenue and the site's courtyard plaza. Additionally, the proposed location of the sign reflects the off-centered building identification sign located on the northerly office tower building, which also overlooks the courtyard plaza, and thus provides a cohesive and balanced design element that is complementary to the commercial office complex.

**CONCLUSION:**

As conditioned, the proposed building identification sign is consistent with the Sign Design Guidelines for the CD Zoning District. The scale of the sign elements is appropriate to the scale of the building, the sign is responsive to the building's architecture, and is consistent with the signage in the commercial office complex, while accommodating the corporate identity needs of the building's tenant. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the project as conditioned.

Respectfully Submitted,



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David M. Reyes  
Director of Planning and  
Community Development

Prepared by:



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Edwar Sissi  
Assistant Planner

Reviewed by:



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Leon E. White  
Principal Planner

Attachment:

A: Plans and photographs