



# PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

VI. 4

MEETING DATE: NOVEMBER 14, 2011

ITEM NUMBER:

**SUBJECT: ZONING APPLICATION ZA-11-37: PLANNED SIGNING PROGRAM FOR PACIFIC ARTS PLAZA AT 3200 BRISTOL STREET, 3200 AND 3210 PARK CENTER DRIVE, 601, 611, 633, 655 AND 675 ANTON BOULEVARD**

**DATE: NOVEMBER 3, 2011**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: WENDY SHIH, ASSOCIATE PLANNER  
(714) 754-5136 (WENDY.SHIH@COSTAMESACA.GOV)**

## DESCRIPTION

The applicant requests approval of a new planned signing program (PSP) to replace the existing sign program(s) for Pacific Arts Plaza. The request includes one 35-foot high/508 square-foot freeway-oriented sign at the 405 Freeway off-ramp (32 feet high/230 square feet maximum allowed per Code). Additionally, the proposed program represents a comprehensive compilation of all previously-approved elements of other planned signing programs relevant to this property.

## APPLICANT

David J. Baab of Baab & Associates is the authorized agent for the Irvine Company.

## RECOMMENDATION

Approve by adoption of Planning Commission resolution, subject to conditions.

## BACKGROUND

### *Project Site*

Pacific Arts Plaza is approximately 18 acres and contains a mixture of low-rise restaurant buildings, mid- and high-rise office buildings, and two parking structures. It is one of three sub-areas within the South Coast Plaza Town Center (SCPTC), also known as the Costa Mesa Theater and Arts District. It is bounded by Anton Boulevard to the north, Bristol Street to the west, Avenue of the Arts to the east, and the 405 Freeway off-ramp to the south. The site is zoned TC (Town Center) and has a General Plan land use designation of Cultural Arts Center.

### *Previous Planned Signing Programs (PSP)*

In March 2004, the Zoning Administrator approved Planned Signing Program ZA-03-88 for new building and freestanding signs to identify the site as Pacific Arts Plaza (formerly known as Two Town Center).

In January 2006, the Zoning Administrator approved an amendment to the sign program under Zoning Application ZA-05-75 to allow a third floor tenant/eyebrow identification sign facing Bristol Street at 3200 Bristol Street and to modify locations for monument signs along Anton Boulevard. This sign program replaced the previous sign program and consolidated all approved signage for the site. Not all the signs approved under this program were installed.

**Proposed PSP Modifications**

The Irvine Company purchased Pacific Arts Plaza about a year ago and has been working on reinforcing a visual and geographic identity for this site. The applicant requests approval of a new PSP to replace the existing sign program (ZA-05-75) for Pacific Arts Plaza. The PSP proposes to replace previously-approved signs with new signs and to modify several signs to better identify the project area, its tenants, and to provide direction for pedestrians and motorists to the site.

With exception of a 35-foot high/508 square-foot freeway-oriented sign (maximum one 32 FT/230 SF freeway sign allowed by Code), all other proposed signs comply with the existing sign program and/or Code in terms of size, quantity, and location. The proposed freeway sign is the only sign that requires approval of a PSP. However, the entire sign program is included for informational purposes with this application. This sign program will replace and incorporate all sign approvals for Pacific Arts Plaza.

The proposed sign program will not conflict with the Theater and Arts District sign program, which is currently being developed pursuant to the development agreements for the area.

The following table summarizes the proposed modifications for the new sign program:

<b>Sign Type</b>	<b>Existing PSP</b>	<b>Proposed PSP</b>	<b>Proposed Modifications</b>
<b>Freestanding Signs</b>			
Freeway <sup>1</sup>	(1) 25 FT/100 SF	(1) 35 FT/508 SF <sup>1</sup>	+ 10 FT/408 SF
Freeway	(1) 25 FT/100 SF	None	Delete sign
Multi-Tenant Monument	(6) 6 FT/30 SF	(7) 6FT/30 SF	+ 1 sign
Single-Tenant Monument	(4) 8 FT/15 SF	(1) 8 FT/15 SF	Delete 3 signs
Small Directional	(7) 4 FT/4 SF	(6) 6 FT/23 SF	Delete 1 sign and + 2 FT/19 SF
Large Directional	(5) 8 FT/15 SF	(7) 5 FT/10.5 SF	+ 2 signs and decrease size by

			3 FT/4.5 SF
Building Signs			
Tenant ID on Parking Structure (Freeway Off-ramp)	(4) 144 SF	None	Delete 4 signs
Building/Tenant (601 Anton)	(1) 75 SF	(2) 75 SF	+ 1 Sign
Building/Tenant (655 Anton)	(1) 75 SF	(2) 75 SF	+ 1 Sign
Parking Structure ID (Avenue of the Arts)	None	75 SF	+ 75 SF Parking sign
Overall Site			
Existing PSP <sup>2</sup>	Code Allowance	Proposed PSP <sup>2</sup>	
6,427 SF	5,793 SF	5,518 SF	

- 1 PSP required for this sign; Code allows maximum one 32 FT/230 SF freeway sign.
- 2 Includes all pedestrian and/or vehicular directional signs.

**Review by Planning Commission**

The Zoning Code identifies the Zoning Administrator as the final review authority for planned signing programs. However, this application has been forwarded directly to the Planning Commission due to the high level of community interest in development activity and signage in the Town Center area.

**ANALYSIS**

**Staff Justifications for Approval**

Staff recommends approval of the PSP for the following reasons:

- The proposed primary project/freeway sign is consistent with the intent of the Sign Code and the General Plan.

The Zoning Code allows signs to be authorized as part of a PSP even if they do not conform to all specific regulations contained in the Sign Ordinance. A PSP is intended to provide maximum incentive and latitude to encourage variety and good design, and to allow response to special circumstances. It is not intended to be used to circumvent the objectives of the sign regulations.

The following table provides a comparison of the existing primary project sign located at the 405 freeway off-ramp (northwest corner of off-ramp and Avenue of the Arts) with the Code and with the replacement sign that is proposed by the applicant at the same location:

Existing Sign	Code Allowance	Proposed Sign
25 FT/100 SF	32 FT/230 SF	35 FT/508 SF

Staff believes the proposed freeway sign meets the purpose of the sign regulations, which is to balance the identification and communication needs of businesses for a pleasant, uncluttered environment. The applicant indicated that the existing sign does not adequately identify Pacific Arts Plaza from the freeway off-ramp. The applicant proposes to delete one of the freestanding freeway-oriented signs and four parking structure tenant signs, which equate to 676 square feet less signage along the freeway from the existing sign program, and install a larger freestanding sign that would better identify the project. The proposed sign will contain the project name and list major tenants. Staff believes that due to the size of the development (approximately 18 acres) and length of the freeway frontage (approximately 1,400 feet), a single 35-foot high/508 square-foot project identification/freeway sign would not appear out of scale or create visual clutter along the freeway off-ramp.

It is also the intent of the sign regulations to implement the goals of the General Plan to create and maintain an aesthetically pleasing and functional environment and to create an environment where businesses can succeed while being in harmony with other City goals. As discussed below under “General Plan Conformity”, staff believes the proposal is consistent with General Plan Goals CD-1, 16, and 13.

- Approval of the PSP would not constitute a grant of special privilege or allow substantially greater overall visibility than the standard ordinance provisions allow.

Approval of the PSP, including the 35-foot high/508 square-foot freeway sign, would not allow greater overall visibility than the existing PSP or the Sign Code. As indicated in the comparison table below, the total sign area proposed for the new PSP is 909 square feet less than the existing PSP and 275 square feet less than the standard ordinance allows for Pacific Arts Plaza.

TOTAL SIGN AREA AT PACIFIC ARTS PLAZA		
Existing PSP	Code Allowance	Proposed PSP
6,427 SF	5,793 SF	5,518 SF

As mentioned earlier, the applicant proposes to delete one freestanding sign and four parking structure wall signs along the freeway off-ramp. Staff believes that the size of the development and length of the freeway frontage provide justification for approval of a single 35-foot high/508 square-foot project identification/freeway sign because the sign would not appear out of scale or create visual clutter along the freeway off-ramp.

- The proposed signs are consistent with each other and are compatible with the buildings and development they identify.

All signs will have a uniform design, constructed of stainless steel cabinet with translucent polycarbonate panel and stone veneer base. In addition to the freeway-oriented sign, two 25-foot tall project/pylon signs will be located at two corners of the project (Bristol Street/Anton Boulevard and Avenue of the Arts/Anton Boulevard) and an entry sign on Park Center Drive. These signs will frame and provide identity for Pacific Arts Plaza. The remaining signs include multi-tenant monument signs and directional signs to promote efficient on-site circulation and parking distribution. Staff believes that incorporating new and uniform sign design elements is an upgrade for the plaza.

Although the proposal does include 25-foot tall signage (12-foot high maximum allowed by Code), these signs were approved in the previous sign program. The Zoning Code was amended in October 2011 to reduce the maximum height of freestanding signs from 25 feet to 12 feet.

- Proposed signage does not conflict with the Theater Arts District Plan. The Irvine Company has expressed an interest to implement an additional pedestrian-oriented sign to further identify the Theater Arts District (TAD) and Noguchi Gardens/California Scenario. This sign would be consistent in design with other proposed TAD signage and would potentially be located at the corner of Park Center Drive and Anton Boulevard. TAD signage shall be separately approved from the proposed signage in this application.

## **GENERAL PLAN CONFORMITY**

Staff believes that the proposed sign program is consistent with the following General Plan goals:

- Goal CD-1: Vehicular and Pedestrian Corridors: Strengthen the image of the City as experienced from sidewalks and roadways.
- Goal CD-6, Image: Enhance opportunities for development to contribute to a positive visual image for the City of Costa Mesa.
- Goal CD-13, Signs: Ensure that signs contribute positively to Costa Mesa's image and overall economic development.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

The Planning Commission has the following alternatives:

1. Approve ZA-11-37. This would allow installation of the signs for Pacific Arts Plaza as proposed by the applicant.
2. Deny ZA-11-37. If Commission denies the application, the proposed freeway-oriented sign could not be installed on the property. A similar request may not be submitted for six months unless the Commission denies the application without prejudice.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the CEQA Guidelines, and the City environmental procedures, and has been found to be exempt from CEQA under Section 15311 for Accessory Structures. If the project is denied, it is exempt from the provisions of CEQA Section 15270(a) for Projects Which Are Disapproved.

## CONCLUSION

Staff believes that the proposed sign program is consistent with the intent of the City's Sign Code and General Plan. The size of the development and length of the freeway frontage provide justification for approval of a single 35-foot high/508 square-foot project identification/freeway-oriented sign. All the proposed signs for the site exhibit quality design, construction, and materials which would reinforce the identity of the Pacific Arts Plaza property.

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WENDY SHIH  
Associate Planner

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CLAIRE FLYNN, AICP  
Acting Assistant Development Svs. Director

Attachments: 1. [Draft Planning Commission Resolutions](#)  
2. [Location Map](#)  
3. [Plans](#)  
4. [Supplemental Memo](#)

Distribution: Interim Development Services Director  
Deputy City Attorney  
City Engineer  
Transportation Svs. Mgr.  
Fire Protection Analyst  
Staff (4)  
File (2)

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**RESOLUTION NO. PC-11-**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA APPROVING ZONING APPLICATION ZA-11-37 FOR A PLANNED SIGNING PROGRAM FOR PACIFIC PARTS PLAZA**

THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

WHEREAS, an application was filed by David J. Baab of Baab & Associates, authorized agent for the Irvine Company, owner of the Pacific Arts Plaza located at 3200 Bristol Street, 3200 and 3210 Park Center Drive, and 601, 611, 633, 655, and 675 Anton Boulevard;

WHEREAS, the applicant requests approval of a new planned signing program to replace previous sign program for Pacific Arts Plaza;

WHEREAS, a duly noticed public hearing was held by the Planning Commission on November 14, 2011, with all persons provided an opportunity to speak for and against the proposed project;

BE IT RESOLVED that, based on the evidence in the record and the findings contained in Exhibit "A", and subject to the conditions contained in Exhibit "B", the Planning Commission hereby **APPROVES** Zoning Application ZA-11-37 with respect to the property described above.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Costa Mesa Planning Commission does hereby find and determine that adoption of this Resolution is expressly predicated upon the activity as described in the staff report for Zoning Application ZA-11-37 and upon applicant's compliance with each and all of the conditions contained in Exhibit "B", as well as with compliance of all applicable federal, State, and local laws. Any approval granted by this resolution shall be subject to review, modification or revocation if there is a material change that occurs in the operation, or if the applicant fails to comply with any of the conditions of approval.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED this 14<sup>th</sup> day of November 2011.**

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COLIN MCCARTHY  
Chair, Costa Mesa Planning Commission



**EXHIBIT "A"**

**FINDINGS**

- A. The proposed project complies with Costa Mesa Municipal Code Section 13-29(g)(8) because:
1. The proposed sign program is consistent with the intent of Chapter VIII Signs and the General Plan. The proposed freeway sign meets the purpose of the sign regulations, which is to balance the identification and communication needs of businesses for a pleasant, uncluttered environment. The size of the development (approximately 18 acres) and length of the freeway frontage (approximately 1,400 feet) provide justification for approval of a single 35-foot high/508 square-foot project identification/freeway sign. The sign will not appear out of scale or create visual clutter along the freeway off-ramp.
  2. The proposed signs are consistent with each other in design and construction which take into account sign style and shape, materials, letter style, colors and illumination. All the proposed signs for the site will have a uniform appearance which will frame and provide identity for Pacific Arts Plaza.
  3. The proposed signs are compatible with the buildings and developments they identify with regard to materials, colors and design motif.
  4. Approval does not constitute a grant of special privilege or allow substantially greater visibility than what the standard sign provisions would allow. Specifically, the total sign area proposed for the new PSP is 909 square feet less than the existing PSP and 275 square feet less than the standard ordinance allows.
- B. The project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the CEQA Guidelines; and the City environmental procedures, and has been found to be exempt from CEQA under Section 15311 for Accessory Structures.
- C. The project is exempt from Chapter XII, Article 3, Transportation System Management, of Title 13 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code.

**EXHIBIT "B"**

**CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

1. All newly installed signs shall be in conformance to the requirements and intent of this planned signing program, as well as other applicable Codes and regulations. Any sign not meeting the specific criteria outlined in the planned signing program shall not be permitted unless approved by the Development Services Director or his/her designee.
2. The City's Sign Ordinance shall apply to signs not specifically covered by this planned signing program, including the previously approved 25-foot high monument signs.
3. Any modification, addition, or deletion to the approved planned signing program shall be reviewed by the Zoning Administrator to determine if an amendment to the planned signing program is necessary.
4. The planned signing program may be referred to the Planning Commission for modification or revocation at any time if the conditions of approval have not been complied with, or if, in the reasonable opinion of the Development Services Director or his/her designee, any of the findings upon which the approval was based are no longer applicable.

**RESOLUTION NO. PC-11-**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY  
OF COSTA MESA DENYING ZONING APPLICATION ZA-11-37 FOR  
A PLANNED SIGNING PROGRAM FOR PACIFIC PARTS PLAZA**

THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

WHEREAS, an application was filed by David J. Baab of Baab & Associates, authorized agent for the Irvine Company, owner of the Pacific Arts Plaza located at 3200 Bristol Street, 3200 and 3210 Park Center Drive, and 601, 611, 633, 655, and 675 Anton Boulevard;

WHEREAS, the applicant requests approval of a new planned signing program to replace previous sign program for Pacific Arts Plaza;

WHEREAS, a duly noticed public hearing was held by the Planning Commission on November 14, 2011, with all persons provided an opportunity to speak for and against the proposed project;

BE IT RESOLVED that, based on the evidence in the record and the findings contained in Exhibit "A, the Planning Commission hereby **DENIES** Zoning Application ZA-11-37 with respect to the property described above.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED this 14<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2011.**

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COLIN MCCARTHY  
Chair, Costa Mesa Planning Commission

**EXHIBIT "A"**

**FINDINGS**

- A. The proposed project does not comply with Costa Mesa Municipal Code Section 13-29(g)(8) because:
  - 1. The proposed signing is not consistent with the intent of Chapter VIII Signs and the General Plan.
  - 2. The proposed signs are not consistent with each other in design and construction.
  - 3. The proposed signs are not compatible with the buildings and developments they identify.
  - 4. Approval would constitute a grant of special privilege or allow substantially greater visibility than what the standard sign provisions would allow.
  
- B. The Costa Mesa Planning Commission has denied Zoning Application ZA-11-37. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080(b)(5) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15270(a), CEQA does not apply to this project because it has been rejected and will not be carried out.

**CODE REQUIREMENTS**

The following list of federal, state and local laws applicable to the project has been compiled by staff for the applicant's reference. Any reference to "City" pertains to the City of Costa Mesa.

- PIng. 1. Approval of the zoning application is valid for one (1) year from the effective date of this approval and will expire at the end of that period unless applicant establishes the use by obtaining permits for the authorized construction and initiates construction. If the applicant is unable to obtain permits within the one-year time period, the applicant may request an extension of time. The Planning Division must receive a written request for the time extension prior to the expiration of the zoning application.
- 2. Permits shall be obtained for all signs according to the provisions of the Costa Mesa Sign Ordinance.
- Bus. 3. All contractors and subcontractors must have valid business licenses to do business in the City of Costa Mesa. Final inspections, final Lic. occupancy and utility releases will not be granted until all such licenses have been obtained.
- Bldg. 4. Comply with the requirements of the 2010 California Building Code, California Electrical Code, California Mechanical Code, California Plumbing Code (or the applicable adopted codes at the time of plan submittal) and California Code of Regulations, also known as the California Building Standards Code, as amended by the City of Costa Mesa.