



CITY OF CARSON

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

NEW BUSINESS DISCUSSION: May 10, 2011
 SUBJECT: South Bay Pavilion Advertising Signs
 APPLICANT: Vintage Real Estate, LLC
 11611 San Vincente Boulevard, 10th Floor
 Los Angeles, CA 90049
 REQUEST: Workshop to discuss updating the South Bay Pavilion sign program to allow permanent advertising signs for tenants and uses within the mall
 PROPERTY INVOLVED: 20700 S. Avalon Boulevard

COMMISSION ACTION

- Concurred with staff
 Did not concur with staff
 Other

COMMISSIONERS' VOTE

AYE	NO		AYE	NO	
		Chairman Faletogo			Gordon
		Vice-Chair Park			Saenz
		Brimmer			Schaefer
		Diaz			Verrett
		Goolsby			

I. Introduction

Applicant and Property Owner

Vintage Real Estate, LLC
Attn: Jerry N. Garner, Vice President of Development
11611 San Vicente Boulevard, 10th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Project Address

20700 S. Avalon Boulevard

Project Description

On February 7, 2011, the applicant submitted an application to update the sign program for the South Bay Pavilion to allow for permanent advertising signs. The applicant proposes the following:

- Four 8-foot by 21-foot advertising signs at the front of the mall located at the entrance into the food court facing Avalon Boulevard.
- Two 21-foot by 36-foot advertising signs and one 14-foot by 48-foot advertising sign located at the southern portion of the mall facing Target and IKEA.

The purpose of the signs is to attract customers from the larger department stores, Target and IKEA, and from the restaurant pads along Avalon Boulevard. The applicant claims that customers of the department stores and restaurants are not aware of the smaller tenants inside the mall. Thus, the smaller tenants are at a disadvantage in attracting customers and generating business.

The advertising signs will be externally illuminated and have a four-inch-wide frame painted a silver color with a smooth semi-gloss finish. The proposal also includes updating and replacing 14 vehicle directional signs located throughout the mall parking lot.

II. Background

History

Carson Mall was constructed as an indoor mall in 1973 and renovated in 1992. As part of the renovation, the name was changed to the South Bay Pavilion and the Broadway building located in the southern portion of the mall was renovated to support IKEA. The three main retail anchors, Sears, IKEA, and JCPenney, made up 578,584 square feet of the 937,680-square-foot mall. In April 2005, Hopkins Real Estate Group (HREG) purchased the South Bay Pavilion and quickly worked on plans to redesign the mall to provide an outdoor shopping experience. At the time, 86 percent of the mall was occupied. In 2005-2006, the southern portion of the mall next to IKEA was demolished to make room for a fourth main retail anchor, Target, and new building pads and exterior tenant spaces were constructed that currently support

Chase bank, 24 Hour Fitness, Chili's restaurant, Big 5, SanSai Japanese Grill, Panera Bread, Jamba Juice, Five Guys Burgers and Fries as well as others. In 2008, the farmers' market operating at the Community Center parking lot was relocated to the South Bay Pavilion. The farmers' market continues to operate every Thursday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

III. Analysis

Other Malls

Staff contacted three other cities to understand their requirements in approving similar advertising displays.

- Culver City: Westfield Culver City
This mall is visible from the I-405 and CA-90 freeways. It has three advertising towers and multiple advertising display signs similar to the proposal for the South Bay Pavilion. According to city staff, the advertising display signs were approved in accordance with city regulations and are restricted to displaying only uses or products sold at the mall. However, the three towers were not initially supported since the height and advertisement of off-site material were a concern. Through appeal, the City Council approved the height of the three towers. To address concerns of off-site advertisement, the applicant offered to provide a movie ticket kiosk inside the mall since the mall does not have its own movie theatre. The towers regularly advertise movies and since the ticket kiosk is located inside the mall, technically off-site products are not being advertised. There are concerns that these larger signs dubiously meet the requirement for on-site advertising.
- West Covina: Westfield West Covina
This mall is visible from the I-10 freeway and is currently being renovated. Advertising displays are provided on large pylons along the freeway and not on the walls of the mall building. According to city staff, the pylon displays were approved and are limited to displaying only uses and products offered at the mall.
- Huntington Beach: Bella Terra
This is an outdoor mall which is part of a specific plan. The mall is visible from the I-405 freeway and advertising displays are attached to the parking garage structure facing the freeway. No advertising displays were found elsewhere at the mall. According to city staff, the specific plan was amended to allow for advertising displays along the freeway and a sign program was required. The displays are decorated with metal trellises and vines and display material is limited to onsite uses and products.

Advertising Sign Trend - Effectiveness at South Bay Pavilion

In conducting research, staff noted that there are many other malls that do not have large advertising displays. It seems these displays are a new trend that is evolving with the renovation of older malls and construction of newer shopping centers. The three malls discussed earlier are all visible from a freeway. In contrast, although the South Bay Pavilion is visible from the I-405 freeway, the proposed advertising signs would not be legible because of their location and distance from the freeway (over 1,200 feet). Thus, the advertising signs for the South Bay Pavilion would only be effective for vehicles travelling Avalon Boulevard and customers in the mall parking lot or visiting Target or IKEA. As such, it is staff's opinion that large advertising signs are not necessary and that smaller advertising signs could be as effective while being less pronounced.

Carson Municipal Code

The Carson Municipal Code allows for a business sign which is defined in Section 9191.566 as "a sign directing attention to the principal business, profession or industry located upon the premises where the sign is displayed, or to type of products sold, manufactured or assembled, or to services or entertainment offered on said premises." As such, the proposed advertising signs are considered business signs and could be permitted if the sign program for the South Bay Pavilion were amended as approved by the Planning Commission. In terms of meeting the city's requirements, the south-facing signs extend above the height of the building wall in which they are attached, which violates the provision in Section 9136.7(B)(5). This can be addressed by simply reducing the size of the signs so that they fit on the building wall.

In terms of number of signs, it is staff's opinion that four advertising signs at the main entrance into the food court is excessive and should be reduced to two signs. Constructing four signs would detract from the mall's appearance and draw less attention to the "South Bay Pavilion" sign located below the proposed advertising signs just above the main entrance. The Planning Commission does have the authority to limit the number of signs and their appearance pursuant to Section 9136.7(B)(1).

Special Restrictions

It should be noted that the other cities that have advertising signs restrict the display to only uses, products, and tenants located at the mall; off-site advertising (billboards) is prohibited. It is staff's opinion that if the Planning Commission is favorable to the proposal, restrictions should be included limiting the display to only uses and activities occurring at the South Bay Pavilion. This is consistent with the provision of Section 9136.7(A), which states that outdoor advertising signs (billboards) are not permitted in commercial zones.

Additional Design Requirements

The Planning Commission should consider other improvements such as enhanced framing of the signs or additional architectural treatments that improve the aesthetics.

In Huntington Beach, the Bella Vista signs were required to be enhanced with trellises and vines. Although this may be inappropriate for the proposed sign locations at the South Bay Pavilion, additional architectural treatments may be needed.

South Bay Pavilion - IKEA

The South Bay Pavilion is unique because it is the city's regional shopping center and is located within a Mixed Use Residential (MUR) overlay district. In 2009, Ordinance No. 09-1421 was passed to allow "temporary business signs for department stores or regional shopping centers with a gross floor area of at least one hundred thousand (100,000) square feet located in the CR Zoning District and in a Mixed-Use Residential (MUR) Overlay District" to deviate from the general sign requirements as it pertains to display size, location, orientation, material, length of time, and content pursuant to an approved sign program. The ordinance was adopted to allow IKEA to have an advertising sign at the west-facing wall of their building. Recently, staff has been in contact with IKEA and has learned that another advertising sign is desired at the south-facing wall. Although this is not part of the applicant's proposal, the Planning Commission should consider if a second advertising sign for IKEA is necessary.

Alternative Location

Although the applicant is proposing the advertising signs at the entrances to the mall, it is staff's opinion that a potential alternative location would be the north building wall of IKEA. Currently, the north building wall is painted a cream color and void of architectural embellishments and signage. Staff has discussed this alternative with the applicant, however, the applicant claims the IKEA building is under separate ownership and advertising on their wall would not be desirable for IKEA because of easement issues and liability. Nonetheless, if an agreement could be reached between the mall owner and IKEA, the north-facing wall of IKEA would be an ideal location to erect an advertising sign.

IV. Conclusion

The mall certainly is a unique shopping center in the city because it is a regional attraction that delivers high tax revenue to the city. The purpose of the proposed advertising signs is to attract customers inside the mall so that smaller tenants can be profitable. The IKEA building and newly-constructed Target building are major users that attract many customers from a wide region. However, since they are separate from the indoor portion of the mall, customers may not be aware that there are smaller tenants within the mall. The Planning Commission should consider the effectiveness of the proposed advertising signs and the appropriateness in terms of number and size.

V. Recommendation


That the Planning Commission:

- **CONSIDER** and **DISCUSS** the issues presented in this staff report and **DIRECT** staff and the applicant in how to proceed.

VI. Exhibits

1. Proposed South Bay Pavilion sign program amendment plans

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