



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DATE: September 21, 2006

TO: Planning Commission

APPLICANT: ACS Architect for NW Rugs
1122 Bristol Street
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

CASE NO.: 06-SP-045

LOCATION: 28610 Canwood Street
(A.P.N. 2061-001-029)

REQUEST: Request for approval of a Sign Permit to modify a sign program at an existing retail building.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: Exempt from CEQA per Section 15311

RECOMMENDATION: Staff has prepared the attached draft resolution in the event that the Planning Commission's decision is to approve the requested amendment to the sign program. If the Planning Commission's decision is to deny the request, staff will return at the next meeting with a draft resolution for denial.

ZONE DESIGNATION: CRS-FC (Commercial Retail – Freeway Corridor Overlay District)

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: CRS (Commercial Retail)

I. SIGN PERMIT BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant, ACS, is requesting approval to modify the sign program at an existing single occupant retail building located at 28610 Canwood Street. Two wall-mounted signs currently exist with the name of the tenant North West Rugs or NW Rugs. A monument sign was also built along Canwood Street in proximity of the access driveway. The project is a relatively recent project, which was completed in 2000 and a Sign

Program was subsequently reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission in 2002 as required by the Sign Ordinance of all new commercial projects. The Sign Program required the review and approval of a Variance to address the request to install two signs instead of one on a tower element along the south side of the building facing the freeway corridor.

The current request is to modify the sign program to change out the 2 externally illuminated signs on the tower element with 2 internally illuminated signs of the same size with 37.5 square feet each and changing the color from rust to red.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

The parcel is 1.7 acres and is located in the Freeway Corridor between the 101 Freeway and Canwood Street. The parcel is bordered by a truck rental company and Canwood Street as the street borders the irregularly shaped parcel. This parcel is the furthest west out of a group of Commercial Retail Service (CRS) zoned parcels along the east end of Canwood Street. To the west and north are parcels zoned Business Park – Manufacturing (BP-M). The site consists of a 25,835 square-foot, single-story, retail store placed 20 feet from the rear property line and approximately 55 feet from the travel lanes of the 101 freeway with a parking lot on the east side of the building. The store was built with a tower element, located adjacent to the freeway right-of-way, and designed to accommodate freeway facing signage. The applicant requested the approval of signage on two sides of the tower to be visible to motorists traveling in both directions. Currently, no visual barrier stands in the way of the signage. The approved sign program also consisted of a monument identification sign located along the driveway on Canwood Street.

On-Building Signage:

A. Existing Sign

Two signs were approved and built on the tower element of the building. Both signs were built in the same manner. The signs were constructed with channel letters and the letters placed in two rows. The overall square footage of each sign was calculated and approved at 37.5 square feet whereas the Sign Ordinance permits 50 square feet on the primary frontage and 25 square feet for the secondary sign. Foregoing the primary sign could have allowed one 75 square-foot secondary sign. At the time of the approval, the Sign Ordinance required that the building be 125 feet long in order to be eligible for a secondary sign. The requirement has since been eliminated. In approving the Variance, findings were made based on proportion of the signs, obstruction by a building to the west if a sign was to be placed on the west building wall elevation, the combined square-footage would not exceed the provisions for a single secondary sign, the primary sign was reduced in size, and the consistency of the signs with the building proportions.

The letters on the existing signs are approximately 2.5 feet high and 4.5 inches deep. The letters are made out of a metal face and aluminum returns. Illumination is external and is provided by recessed lights placed under the eaves

of the roof of the tower structure. The signs are placed in the center of a 128 square-foot area of the facade on smooth-finished stucco painted beige. The proportion of signage versus wall size is 30%. The letters are of a pale rust color. The colors were selected to establish enough contrast and yet remain in keeping with the architectural integrity of the building design and colors.

B. Proposed Sign

The applicant is now requesting to change the construction of the letters but maintain the size and placement. The proposal is to replace the existing two signs on the tower with Plexiglas face consisting of a translucent red face with a solid black return. The letters would remain channel letters and spaced in the same manner as currently existing. The signs would be internally illuminated.

Monument Sign:

A. Existing:

The existing monument sign is approximately 10 feet long by 2 feet high. The same letters that are currently on the building are also used for the monument sign. The letters were mounted between the two stone-veneered ends of the structure. No internal illumination is provided. The sign is perpendicular to the Canwood right-of-way and placed before the entry to the parking lot.

No change is proposed to the monument sign.

Design Guidelines Compliance and Architectural Compatibility:

The reason for the applicant's request is to gain even greater visibility of the signs from the freeway for the purpose of business identification and advertising. In evaluating this request, the Planning Commission should consider the attached Section 9655 of the Zoning Ordinance which enumerates the purpose and intent of the City's sign regulations. The site is also located in the freeway corridor and is subject to the Freeway Corridor (FC) Overlay zone provisions. The Commission should consider the attached Section 9541, "Purpose" and Section 9541.1, "Corridor Standards" of the FC overlay zoning ordinance in evaluating this request. Also attached is an excerpt from the City's Architectural Design Standards and Guidelines regarding signage which should also be taken into consideration in evaluating this request. In addition, the main purpose of the General Plan Scenic Highway Element is to enhance the visual quality of the freeway corridor. Moreover, the parcel is bordering the Old Agoura Design Overlay district which prohibits internally illuminated signs. Most recent approvals have included an externally illuminated signs for new furniture stores to the east as well as to the west of the parcel. The internally illuminated red letters would depart from the neighborhood compatibility. The City's policy has been to favor more subdued colors.

Additionally, the Planning Commission should consider the precedent setting impacts to future signage along the freeway corridor. The Sign Ordinance specifically states that the illumination of freeway facing signs is subject to Planning Commission review and approval as such signs would contribute to the image of the city as viewed from the freeway. When the Variance was granted,

the Commission based its approval on compatibility and the number of retail stores along the corridor that the decision would impact. Beside NW Rugs, the other retail uses that exist and that directly abut the freeway include the Sleep Shop and Tireman. The Planning Commission should consider whether approval of this particular request would have a precedent setting effect on other similarly situated sites or other sites in the freeway corridor to request similar signs.

The Planning Commission may wish to consider other alternatives besides what is proposed by the applicant. These including changing the method of illumination such as using external instead of internal illumination, using reverse channel letters which produce a halo effect or minimizing the intensity of internal illumination. Other alternatives could include changing the red Plexiglas sign face to a more subdued color and reducing the size of the signs.

Environmental Review

Both projects have been determined to be Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act as an accessory structure to an existing commercial building per Section 15311(a).

III. RECOMMENDATION

Staff has prepared the attached draft resolution in the event that the Planning Commission's decision is to approve the requested amendment to the sign program. If the Planning Commission's decision is to deny the request, staff will return at the next meeting with a draft resolution for denial.

IV. ATTACHMENTS

- Draft Resolution and Conditions of Approval
- Exhibit A: Vicinity/Zoning Map
- Exhibit B: Sign Program Description
- Exhibit C: Sections 9655, 9541 and 9541.1 of the Sign Ordinance and Excerpts from the City's Architectural Design Standards and Guidelines
- Exhibit D: Photographs of the Existing Building

Case Planner: Valerie Darbouze, Associate Planner