



Agenda Report

File #: 19-0552

**PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

DATE: 6/10/2019

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Community Development Department

APPLICATION REQUEST:

SPA2018-0003: Proposal to amend the signage development standards under Section 12.9.4(H) of the El Cerrito Specific Plan (SP91-01) to allow for new signage for the Crossings at Corona shopping center located at the northeast corner of Interstate 15 and Cajalco Road due to the physical changes of the property resulting from the Cajalco Road Interchange Improvement Project (Applicant: Scott Thayer, Castle & Cooke Corona Crossings, LLC).

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the Planning and Housing Commission recommend **APPROVAL of SPA2018-0003** to the City Council, based on the findings contained in the staff report and conditions of approval.

PROJECT SITE SUMMARY

Area of Property: 113.5 acres

Existing Zoning: CC (Commercial Center), El Cerrito Specific Plan (SP91-01)

Existing General Plan: GG (General Commercial)

Existing Land Use: Commercial Center

Surrounding Zoning/Land Uses:

N: Light Industrial designation of the El Cerrito Specific Plan / Vacant land.

E: Self-storage facility, RV storage facility, and vacant land located within unincorporated Riverside County.

S: Agricultural zone / Vacant land.

W: Interstate 15 with a shopping center west of Interstate 15 / Commercial designation of the Eagle Glen Specific Plan.

BACKGROUND

SPA2018-0003 is a proposal by Castle & Cooke to amend the sign regulations governing the Crossings at Corona shopping center located on the northeast corner of Interstate 15 and Cajalco Road to allow for taller and larger monument and pylon signs within the center. The regulations being amended are under Section 12.9.4(H) of the El Cerrito Specific Plan. The applicant is seeking

the amendment because the signage at the subject site has been impacted visually by the recent construction associated with the I-15 & Cajalco Road Interchange Improvement Project. The interchange improvements include the reconstruction of the Cajalco Road overpass over Interstate 15, an elevated I-15 northbound onramp from Cajalco Road, and the widening of Cajalco Road within this improvement area.

The shopping center originally had a total of 13 freestanding signs (10 monuments and 3 pylons) constructed along the site's west and south perimeters adjacent to I-15 and Cajalco Road, respectively. Three six-foot high monument signs located along Cajalco Road were recently removed due to the widening of Cajalco Road. Seven 14-foot high monument signs and one 60-foot high pylon sign located along the freeway will need to be removed because their visibility to freeway motorists will be significantly impaired by the new Cajalco overpass and onramp. Two signs are being protected in place which include one existing 60-foot high pylon sign along the site's freeway frontage and one existing 35-foot high pylon sign along the Cajalco frontage.

In order to mitigate the impacts created by the freeway improvements, Castle & Cooke is proposing to construct the following replacement signs:

- Three (3) 14-foot high monument signs along Cajalco Road to replace the three (3) previous six-foot high monument signs that were removed.
- Three (3) 33.5-foot high monument signs along Interstate 15 to replace the seven (7) 14-foot high monument signs that are planned for removal.
- One (1) 92-foot high pylon sign adjacent to the new onramp to replace the 60-foot high pylon sign that is planned for removal.

The site plan in Exhibit C depicts the locations of the existing and proposed signs along Cajalco Road and Interstate 15. In total, 11 existing signs have been or will be impacted by the improvements. These will be replaced by seven (7) taller and larger signs. The proposed height, size, and number of tenants for the signs are being addressed by the specific plan amendment in Exhibit A. The applicant's proposal includes a sign program for the center which reflects the new signs described above. The amendment and corresponding sign program are discussed in further detail under the section **Proposed Specific Plan Amendment**.

The Crossings shopping center is the only site within the El Cerrito Specific Plan area that will be affected by the amendment proposed under Section 12.9.4(H) as this code section applies only to properties that are in the CC (Commercial Center) District and the shopping center is currently the only site with this zoning.

The amendment and sign program were initially discussed at the Infrastructure Committee meeting on September 5, 2018. The Committee wanted to see the applicant make proper provisions in the amendment to facilitate the re-occupation of vacancies within the shopping center with quality users that might benefit from added visibility from the street. Overall, the Committee did not object to the new signage.

Castle & Cooke formally submitted the specific plan amendment application to the city on October 2, 2018. The application was reviewed by city staff at the Project and Environmental Review Committee meeting on October 25, 2018 where staff determined the application materials to be incomplete. The applicant over time submitted the required materials to staff with the application

finally considered complete on May 24, 2019, and cleared for public hearing before the Planning and Housing Commission on June 10, 2019.

PROPOSED SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT

Section 12.9.4(H) is being amended as shown Exhibit A. New text is shown in red and underline, and existing text to be deleted is shown in strikethrough. The following describes the changes to the sign regulations for the CC District:

12.9.4(H)(5) Blade Signs

The current sign regulations allow blade signs which identify the name of the tenant to be installed under the building canopy and project 3.5 from the building face. This code section is being revised to allow blade signs to project no more than 4 feet from a building face.

12.9.4(H)(7) Monument Signs

The current sign regulations allow two types of monument signs to be installed within a commercial center - Project Identification Monument Signs and Tenant Identification Monument Signs (to be renamed Multi-Tenant Monument Signs). Project Identification Monuments Signs are allowed to advertise only the name of the center while Multi-Tenant Monument Signs are allowed to advertise tenant names. Changes are proposed to the height, length, and allowable locations for Project Identification Monument Signs. Page 13 of Exhibit J (Crossings sign program) shows three Project Identification Monuments Signs are being proposed at three different locations along the site's east perimeter adjacent to Temescal Canyon Street. Pages 27-28 of Exhibit J conceptually depict the proposed design of the sign.

Changes are also proposed to Multi-Tenant Monument Signs with respect to height, sign area, and the number of tenants that can be advertised on each sign. Two Multi-Tenant Monument Signs are proposed along the site's Cajalco Road frontage to replace the three monument signs that were removed as a result of Cajalco Road being widened. The design of the sign is depicted on page 26 of Exhibit J. Exhibit D provides a cross-section view of Cajalco Road with the existing and new monument signs. The table below summarizes the changes to both types of monument signs.

	Current Sign Regulations			Proposed Sign Regulations		
	Height	Maximum Signage Area	Number of Tenant Panels	Height	Maximum Signage Area	Number of Tenant Panels
Project Identification Monument Signs	6 ft	None, but shall not exceed 15 ft in length	N/A (center name only)	7.5 ft	None, but shall not exceed 20 ft in length	N/A (center name only)
Multi-Tenant Identification Monument Signs	5 ft	27 sq. ft.	2	14 ft	85 sq. ft.	3

12.9.4(H)(8) Project Entrance Pylon Signs

The current sign regulations allow one 35-foot high Project Entrance Pylon Sign with up to 6 tenant names to be installed at the main entrance of a commercial center. The Crossings shopping center currently has this type of pylon sign east of the main entrance on Cajalco Road as shown on the site plan in Exhibit C. The revision under this code section proposes to allow 7 tenants to be advertised on the sign instead of 6. However, there is no proposal to increase the sign area of the sign because the existing sign has two larger panels that can accommodate two tenant names each as shown on page 24 of Exhibit J.

12.9.4(H)(9) Freeway Oriented Signs

The current regulations allow commercial centers that have freeway frontage to have up to two 60-foot high freeway-oriented pylon signs. Each sign is currently allowed to advertise up to 8 tenants. The Crossings center currently has two 60-foot high pylon signs along the site's west perimeter adjacent to Interstate 15. One is located on the north end of the west perimeter and the other is located on the south end near the northbound onramp. Due to the new Cajalco overpass and raised onramp, the south pylon sign will be visually impacted from the viewshed of the northbound freeway lanes and, as such, will need to be removed. Exhibit E depicts the motorists' line of sight from the northbound freeway lanes with the raised onramp.

The revisions under this code section propose to allow for a 92-foot high pylon sign to be constructed adjacent to the onramp. This sign would replace the existing 60-foot sign. The new sign would be allowed to have up to 7 tenants plus a 12' x 26' electronic message board. A total sign area of 870 square feet, which includes the electronic message board, is proposed. Exhibit F provides a cross-section view of the 92-foot high sign next to the onramp retaining wall. This section of the retaining wall is 19 feet high; however, the wall increases up to 26 feet high at its highest point. As shown on page 23 of Exhibit J, only the upper 62 feet of the pylon sign will be visible from street view as the bottom 30-foot portion contains the structural support which will be behind the retaining wall and will not be visible from the street or freeway. Therefore, the height of the sign from the finish grade of the street is 62 feet.

The north pylon will remain on the property as this sign will not be impacted by the freeway improvements (Exhibit J, page 21). However, the maximum allowable sign area in the sign regulations for this particular sign is being revised from 300 to 640 square feet to accurately reflect the total sign area of all 6 panels on the sign. When the sign was originally permitted, the sign area was calculated based on the combined area of the tenant names (sign copy) and not the size of the panels (sign copy area), which allowed the sign to be within the 300 square foot maximum allowable sign area under the current regulations. In order to be consistent with the new sign program which is calculating the sign area for the new signs based on the size of the panels, the applicant is simply correcting the maximum allowable square footage in the sign regulations for the existing sign. No physical changes are proposed to the sign.

The revisions also propose to install a Project Identification Sign along the freeway as shown on page 26 of Exhibit J. The sign is comprised of only the name of the shopping center designed as individual channel letters that will be lit by LED uplights. The letters are 8 feet in height and will be mounted on a steel structure which will give the sign an overall height of approximately 15 feet. The overall length of the sign is 105 feet. A cross-section view of the freeway with the sign is shown in

Exhibit I.

The applicant has prepared photosimulations of the proposed signs which are attached as Exhibit K. The conditions of approval in Exhibit B ensure that the applicant obtain a permit for all new signs which will be reviewed by the respective city departments prior to issuance of a permit. Also, the new signs are required to be equipped with a dimmer for nighttime hours.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Per Section 15061(b)(3) of the State Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a Notice of Exemption has been prepared for the project because Section 15061(b)(3) states that a project is exempted from CEQA if the activity is covered by the *common sense exemption* that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This amendment is solely a text revision and there is no possibility that adopting this Ordinance will have a significant effect on the environment. The Notice of Exemption is attached as Exhibit M.

FISCAL IMPACT

The applicant paid \$5,757.00 in application processing fees for the specific plan amendment.

PUBLIC NOTICE AND COMMENTS

A 10-day public notice was mailed to all property owners within a 500-foot radius of the project site, as well as advertised in the Sentinel Weekly News and posted at the project site. As of the preparation of this report, the Community Development Department has not received any response from the public regarding the proposal.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The specific plan amendment is being proposed as a result of construction associated with the I-15 and Cajalco Road interchange that has directly impacted the visibility of the signage for the Crossings shopping center. A total of 11 monument and pylon signs located along the site's west and south perimeters adjacent to Interstate 15 and Cajalco Road, respectively, have been or will need to be removed. Although the applicant's amendment and corresponding sign program propose taller signs with larger square footages for the sign area for these frontages, the applicant is reducing the number of signs and consolidating the number of tenant panels. The amendment would enable the applicant to identify and provide adequate visibility for the businesses within the shopping center with signage that is appropriate for its location and proportionate to the size of the property.

The amendment would only affect the subject shopping center as there are no other commercial properties within the El Cerrito Specific Plan area that are zoned Commercial Center District. Finally, the applicant's proposal would contribute to the city's economy by promoting the businesses within the shopping center while at the same time attract new businesses to the center. Therefore, based on the following findings and conditions of approval attached as Exhibit B, SPA2018-0003 is recommended for approval.

FINDINGS OF APPROVAL FOR SPA2018-0003

1. A preliminary exemption assessment has been conducted by the City of Corona and it has shown that this project does not require further environmental assessment because SPA2018-

0003 is strictly a text amendment to the El Cerrito Specific Plan. Per Section 15061(b)(3) of the State Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a project is exempted from CEQA if the activity is covered by the *common sense exemption* that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

2. The proposed amendment is consistent with the General Plan for the following reasons:
 - a. *General Plan Policy 1.11.1 encourages having a comprehensive range of retail, service, and other commercial uses in the city that provide goods and services to meet the diverse needs of Corona's residents and businesses, in accordance with the applicable land use plan's designations and design and development policies. The proposed signage as allowed by SPA2018-0003 will help promote the Crossings shopping center and attract a variety of quality commercial tenants to the center to meet and support the diverse needs of Corona's residents, visitors, and businesses. Overall, the amendment would contribute to the economic health of the shopping center which in turn would contribute revenue to the city to fund essential services.*
 - b. *General Plan Policy 2.5.8 is for the City to work with property owners and developers of freeway-oriented commercial centers to establish an urban design program for commercial centers to enhance their aesthetic quality, image, and "fit" with adjoining land uses. Elements of the program may include site and entry identification by signage, landscape, or lighting, extensive on-site landscape, public art, improvements of abutting public streetscapes, and other amenities. The proposed amendment and sign program enhance the appearance of the commercial center and requires signage to use quality materials and be architecturally compatible with the center's buildings.*
3. The proposed amendment is consistent with the intent of the El Cerrito Specific Plan for the following reasons:
 - a. *The amendment will help encourage and retain attractive and viable commercial uses along Temescal Canyon Road that will serve the community and create a more economically balanced community with the potential for employment.*
 - b. *The amendment will not result in any impacts to wildlife habitat, open space land, historic sites, sensitive species, or scenic locations because the project site is already developed and the new signage simply replaces signage that previously existed on the property.*
4. The proposed amendment does not conflict with the Pre-annexation Policy for the El Cerrito community as set out in Section 2.3 of the El Cerrito Specific Plan because the amendment is strictly a text revision to the signage standards for commercial developments located within the Commercial Center District.
5. The proposed amendment will not impact the circulation to, from, and within the El Cerrito area because all signage as allowed by SPA2018-0003 for the Commercial Center District will be constructed onsite and will be located in a manner that would not impair the visibility of

drivers.

6. The proposed amendment will allow for new signage to be constructed within an existing shopping center which will not disrupt or deplete public and private open space.
7. The proposed amendment is compatible with the surrounding designations, will not create future land use incompatibilities and provides adequate buffers. The signs proposed by SPA2018-0003 are appropriate for the regional shopping center which serves multiple communities within and outside of Corona. Furthermore, the signs are proportionate and to scale with the size of the property.
8. The proposed amendment only affects signage for an existing shopping center located within the Commercial Center District of the El Cerrito Specific Plan and does not jeopardize the city's ability to levy sufficient special taxes on the subject property to pay debt service on the outstanding bonds for Community Facilities District No. 2002-4 or alter the security for the payment of principal and interest on the outstanding bonds for Community Facilities District No. 2002-4.

PREPARED BY: SANDRA YANG, SENIOR PLANNER

SUBMITTED BY: JOANNE COLETTA, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

EXHIBITS

1. Locational and Zoning Map.
2. Exhibit A - Proposed Amendment to Section 12.9.4(H)(9) of the El Cerrito S.P.
3. Exhibit B - Conditions of Approval.
4. Exhibit C - Crossings Freeway Signage Replacement Plan.
5. Exhibit D - Cross-section of Cajalco Road with new 14-foot high monument signs.
6. Exhibit E - Cross-sections of I-15 northbound onramp with existing 60-foot pylon sign to be removed.
7. Exhibit F - Cross-section of Cajalco Road/I-15 northbound onramp with new 92-foot high freeway-oriented pylon sign.
8. Exhibit G - Cross-section of I-15 northbound onramp with existing 14-foot high monument signs to be removed.
9. Exhibit H - Cross-section of I-15 northbound onramp with new 33.5-foot high monument signs.
10. Exhibit I - Cross-section of I-15 northbound onramp with new project identification sign (up-lit individual letters).
11. Exhibit J - New Sign Program for the Crossings at Corona shopping center.
12. Exhibit K - Photosimulations of signs.
13. Exhibit L - Applicant's letter dated April 4, 2019, requesting the specific plan amendment.
14. Exhibit M - Environmental Document.

Case Planner: Sandra Yang (951) 736-2262