

FINDINGS

(as modified in conformance with the ordinance changes made by
the Planning and Land Use Committee on August 20, 2019)

A. The requested Sign District Amendment is in conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the City of Los Angeles General Plan.

The amendment to the Sign District is in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent, and provisions of the General Plan. In addition, the requested modifications to the NoHo West Sign District Ordinance are consistent with and implement policies in the North Hollywood – Valley Village Community Plan, a component of the Land Use Element of the General Plan, as explained below:

Framework Element. The General Plan Framework sets forth a citywide comprehensive long-range growth strategy and defines citywide policies regarding such issues as land use, housing, urban form, neighborhood design, open space, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, and public services. The framework plan denotes the project area as a “Regional Center”, which is identified as a focal point for regional commerce, identity, and activity, and containing a diversity of uses such as corporate and professional offices, residential, retail commercial malls, government buildings, major health facilities, major entertainment and cultural facilities and supporting services. Regional Centers are usually major transportation hubs and are typically developed with floor area ratios from 1.5:1 to 6.0:1 and building heights from six to twenty stories, but floor area and height standards may be further refined by local community plans.

The amendment involves revisions to the operation and placement of certain signage and revisions to the procedural provisions of the previously adopted Sign District. The amendment would further enhance the Project’s ability to create a sense of identity by concentrating project identification signage along visible corridors, reducing freeway-facing signage, providing functional way-finding signage and directories, and emboldening the central plaza as a focal point of the site through the use of a variety of sign typologies and artistic installations. As such, the amendment would support the mix of housing and employment to the Regional Center area, and the objectives of the Framework Element.

General Plan Land Use Designation. The subject property is located within the North Hollywood – Valley Village Community Plan, updated and adopted by the City Council on May 14, 1996. The existing Plan designates the subject site for Community Commercial land uses with corresponding zones of CR, C1, C1.5, C2, C4, RAS3, RAS4, P, and PB. The site is also subject to Footnote No.3 of the Plan, which states that the Community Commercial designation corresponds to an average Height District No. 1 with a maximum of Height District No. 2. On December 14, 2016, the City Council approved a zone change for the site to the C2-1 Zone. On May 24, 2017, the City Council approved the establishment of the NoHo West Sign District (SN). In the course of both legislative actions, the City Council found that the zone change and zone establishment were consistent with the proposed land use designation and footnotes, and were in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the General Plan as reflected in the adopted Community Plan. Overall, the proposed Amendment involves revisions to reduce freeway-facing signage and revisions to the procedural provisions of the previously adopted Sign District. As such, the amendment would similarly be in keeping with the General Plan.

General Plan Text. The North Hollywood – Valley Village Community Plan further defines a subset of the Framework’s Regional Center area, which includes the project site and the adjacent Valley Plaza shopping center site, as the “Valley-Laurel Plaza Regional Shopping Area” (RSA), and states that the economic health of the community partially depends on the vitality of the

Valley-Laurel Plaza RSA. The Plan also addresses commercial and residential issues broadly, and notes that there is “*potential for residential and mixed use development along commercial corridors*” and intends “*to promote economic wellbeing and public convenience through allocating and distributing commercial lands for retail, service and office facilities*”.

In addition, the site is within the Laurel Canyon Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Project Area for the Laurel Canyon commercial corridor. The Redevelopment Plan was prepared by the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) in response to the 1994 Northridge Earthquake to facilitate and provide for the repair and replacement of properties damaged or destroyed by the earthquake. The Plan does not further restrict land uses or add any signage limitations which would be applicable to the proposed development. The site is not otherwise located within any other specific plan or special land use district.

The Sign District amendment is consistent with the General Plan Framework, Community Plan, land use designations, and Redevelopment Plan. The amendment involves revisions to the operation and placement of certain signage, including moving Supergraphic signage towards the interior of the site and reducing the size of freeway-facing Supergraphic Signs and Digital Displays, and revisions to the procedural provisions of the previously adopted Sign District. Due to the unique nature of the project as a regional-scale outdoor commercial center and a residential development, the proposed signage would be generally appropriate for the use of the site and is in-line with the City’s signage policies. The proposed sign program creates a unified aesthetic and sense of identify by concentrating project identification signage along visible corridors, reducing freeway-facing signage, ensuring the appropriate identification of individual tenant spaces, providing functional way-finding signage and directories, and emboldening the central plaza as a focal point of the site through the use of a variety of sign typologies and artistic installations. Specifically, the requested relocation of Supergraphic signs will create a more dynamic commercial corridor on the interior of the Project site and will improve the freeway-facing façade of the parking structure by reducing the number of freeway-facing signage. Additionally, the modified sign reduction program and refresh rates create parity with citywide signage policy, creating level opportunities for commercial identification and advertising as with other Regional Centers. The amendment would improve the economic vitality of the area by integrating signage to identify, enliven and support commercial uses onsite, in-line with Plan policies for the Valley-Laurel Plaza Regional Shopping Area. Therefore, the proposed amendment is consistent with the General Plan and the land use designation and will serve to implement the goals and objective of the adopted Community Plan.

B. The Sign District Amendment would conform to public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice.

The Sign District amendment will modify special sign regulations designed to anchor the commercial uses of the shopping center. The Sign District provides a comprehensive sign program for the 25-acre site, comparable to other “large-scale” outdoor shopping developments within the City. The amendment involves revisions to the operation and placement of certain signage and revisions to the procedural provisions of the previously adopted Sign District. These revisions include:(1) make all outward facing signs for on-site advertisement only; (2) reduce the total number of outward facing Supergraphic Signs; (3) reduce the maximum individual sign area square footage for the outward facing Supergraphic Signs and Digital Displays; (4) change the sign reduction provisions for Advertising Kiosks, Supergraphic Signs, and Digital Displays; and (5) make other minor clarifications and corrections. The amendment is substantially consistent with the approved Project with minor changes to the sign program.

The Sign District includes specially tailored signage regulations that will further advance the goals of redeveloping the area by creating an engaging visual environment for visitors and residents of the site. The Sign District, and amendment, creates a unified aesthetic and sense of identify by

concentrating project identification signage along visible corridors, reducing freeway-facing signage, ensuring the appropriate identification of individual tenant spaces, providing functional way-finding signage and directories, and emboldening the central plaza as a focal point of the site through the use of a variety of sign typologies and artistic installations. As such, the NoHo West Sign District conforms to the public necessity, convenience, general welfare of the City and good zoning practice.

The Sign District signage regulations reflect good zoning practice in that they establish signage design criteria, standards, locations, illumination levels, and types of permitted and prohibited signs within the Sign District. Appropriate and balanced sign regulations are necessary to maintain compatibility with surrounding development while fostering a vibrant urban environment, supporting public necessity, general welfare and good zoning practice. The Amendment would reduce the size of freeway-facing Supergraphic Signs and the two Digital Displays on the north and south elevations of the parking structure, visible from the 170 freeway. The revised sign program would eliminate four Supergraphics from the exterior of the parking structure and would relocate three of those Supergraphics to the interior of the commercial project area, for a net reduction of one Supergraphic. The concentration of Supergraphics on the interior of the commercial areas of the site would minimize signage and light spillover adjacent to the freeway and single-family residential areas. In addition, permitted digital displays and supergraphic signage will be installed on-site in tandem with a program for the removal of off-site signage, such as billboards, within the local vicinity, consistent with community policies and interests in improving the community aesthetic and reducing blight. The requested modifications to the sign reduction program procedural requirement will provide provisions for permitting and verification of the removal of signage consistent with City policy and standards with current City practice, as well as provide an alternative compliance option which includes a set of local community benefits. Additionally, Digital Displays subject to Controlled Refresh Rates will be brought into accordance with refresh rate standards for other Sign Districts with Digital Displays, by reducing the Controlled Refresh Rate from one minute to eight seconds.

The amendment maintains and enhances regulations that allow signs which are appropriate for the commercial and residential context of the regional center, and illumination standards of the Sign District further restrict light pollution. In addition, the amendment meets the technical requirements for sign districts, as defined in LAMC Section 13.11.

C. CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) FINDINGS

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an Environmental Impact Report was prepared for the NoHo West Project (Case No. ENV-2015-888-EIR, State Clearinghouse No. 2015041001) by the City of Los Angeles. The Project analyzed in the EIR was a mixed-use development that included residential and commercial uses and associated signage. The EIR identified and disclosed the anticipated signage program for the Project, including tenant and Project identification, monument signs, wayfinding signage, on- and off-site supergraphic signs, digital displays, and advertising kiosks. The EIR concluded that the signage is typical of identification signage for a commercial development and would not adversely impact surrounding uses. In addition, the EIR disclosed that the Project includes illuminated signage to identify the Project and its tenants and to provide digital displays on the parking garage, as well as in kiosks. The intensity of the illuminated signage would be regulated by City code and designed to be shielded and directed away from residential areas and sensitive uses, and instead would be directed toward the interior of the Project Site or the SR-170 Freeway and Laurel Canyon Boulevard. As such, impacts related to the Project's signage were determined to be less than significant.

The Draft EIR was distributed for public review on December 3, 2015 for a 76-day circulation period with the comment period expiring on February 12, 2016. The Final EIR was then distributed on June 28, 2016 and an Errata of minor corrections to the Final EIR was issued on August 23, 2016. An Addendum to the Final EIR was prepared December 8, 2016. The City Council certified the Final EIR and Addendum on December 14, 2016 ("Certified EIR") in conjunction with the approval of the Project (Council File No. 16-1280, CPC-2015-889-VZC-SN-VCU-MCUP-SPR-ZAD-ZAA). In connection with the certification of the EIR, the City Council adopted CEQA findings, including a statement of overriding considerations acknowledging that the Project will have significant effects on the environment (transportation/traffic), and a mitigation monitoring program (2017 CEQA Findings). The City Council adopted all mitigation measures in the EIR as conditions of approval.

The Sign District received final approval from the City Council on May 24, 2017 (Council File No. 16-1280) with Ordinance No. 184950 (effective July 16, 2017) for the Sign District. The City Council found that the Project was assessed in the previously certified EIR and no subsequent EIR or addendum was required for approval of the Sign District.

The amendment to the NoHo West Sign District involves revisions to the operation and placement of certain signage and revisions to the procedural provisions of the previously adopted Sign District. The revisions include: (1) make all outward facing signs for on-site advertisement only; (2) reduce the total number of outward facing Supergraphic Signs; (3) reduce the maximum individual sign area square footage for the outward facing Supergraphic Signs and Digital Displays; (4) change the sign reduction provisions for Advertising Kiosks, Supergraphic Signs, and Digital Displays; and (5) make other minor clarifications and corrections. The only physical change associated with the revised sign program would be the elimination of four proposed Supergraphic Signs from the freeway-facing exterior of the parking structure and relocation of three of those Supergraphic Signs to the interior of the site within the central commercial area, with a net reduction of one Supergraphic Sign, and reduced sign sizes for freeway-facing Supergraphic Signs and Digital Displays. Operational changes include reducing Refresh Rates for Digital Displays from one minute to ten seconds. The amendment is substantially consistent with the approved Project with minor changes to the sign program.

NO SUPPLEMENTAL OR SUBSEQUENT REVIEW IS REQUIRED

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, no supplemental or subsequent EIR is required for the amendment, as there are no significant changes in the Project, surrounding circumstances, or information that would trigger a need for additional environmental review, and that there is no basis for changing the City's conclusions that identified that the Project's benefits override the significant unavoidable impacts of the Project.

In connection with the amendment, the record has been considered to determine whether any of the following exists pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15162:

- 1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
- 2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or negative declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or

- 3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the negative declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:
 - A. The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;
 - B. Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;
 - C. Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

None of the above changes or factors has arisen since the Project approval in 2016 and the Sign District approval in 2017. There are no substantial changes to the Project, and the amendment is substantially the same as the approved Project and Sign District. No substantial changes have been identified to the surrounding circumstances, and no new information of substantial importance has been identified since the Project approval in 2016 and the Sign District approval in 2017. There is no evidence of new or more severe significant impacts, and no new mitigation measures are required for the project.

Accordingly, there is no basis for changing any of the impact conclusions referenced in the certified EIR's CEQA Findings. Similarly, there is no basis for changing any of the mitigation measures referenced in the certified EIR's CEQA Findings, all of which have been implemented as part of the Project's conditions of approval. There is no basis for finding that mitigation measures or alternatives previously rejected as infeasible are instead feasible. There is also no reason to change the determination that the overriding considerations referenced in the certified EIR's CEQA Findings, and each of them considered independently, continue to override the significant and unavoidable impacts of the Project.

Therefore, as the Project was assessed in the previously certified EIR, and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15162, no supplement or subsequent EIR or subsequent mitigated negative declaration is required for the Sign District amendment, as the whole of the administrative record demonstrates that no major revisions to the EIR are necessary due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of a previously identified significant effect resulting from changes to the project, changes to circumstances, or the existence of new information. In addition, no addendum is required, as no changes or additions to the EIR are necessary pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15164.

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

The record of proceedings for the decision includes the Record of Proceedings for the original CEQA Findings, including all items included in the amendment file, as well as all written and oral information submitted at the hearing on this matter. The documents and other materials that constitute the record of proceedings on which the City of Los Angeles' CEQA Findings are based are located at the Department of City Planning, 221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 1350, Los Angeles, CA 90021. This information is provided in compliance with CEQA Section 21081.6(a)(2).