

Planning Commission Staff Report

February 27, 2013
Item 6.c.

- SUBJECT:** P12-1797
- APPLICANT:** Colliers International (Rina Morningstar)
- PROPERTY OWNER:** Colliers International (Rina Morningstar)
- PURPOSE:** Application for Sign Design Review approval to amend the Master Sign Program for the Pleasanton Gateway shopping center to add three tenant signs to the west side of the Shops #8 building.
- GENERAL PLAN:** Retail/Highway/Service Commercial, Business and professional Offices
- SPECIFIC PLAN:** Bernal Property Specific Plan (Commercial)
- ZONING:** PUD (Planned Unit Development) – C (Commercial)
- LOCATION:** 6786 Bernal Avenue (the northwest corner of the property facing the Bernal Avenue/northbound I-680 off-ramp).
- EXHIBIT:**
- A. Draft Conditions of Approval, dated February 27, 2013.
 - B. Shops #8 Sign Plans, dated "Received November 30, 2012" with Site Plan and Building Elevation.
 - C. P12-0794, Amended Master Sign Program for the Pleasanton Gateway Shopping Center, dated November 19, 2012, revised according to conditions of approval.
 - D. Excerpt of Ordinance 2014 for PUD-02-07M.
 - E. Location and Noticing Area Map
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I. BACKGROUND

Background

The Pleasanton Gateway shopping center was formerly owned by Property Development Centers (PDC), the development/construction/property management division of the Safeway Company, since 2009. In late 2012, PDC completed the sale of the entire Pleasanton Gateway shopping center to Colliers International who took over the design, leasing, and management functions for the shopping center. The Safeway Company retained ownership of the two properties with its grocery store and service station.

Prior to the sale of the shopping center, PDC submitted P12-1797, the application for Sign Design Review to amend the shopping center's master sign program to add three tenant signs on the west side of the Shops #8 building (nearing completion). PDC representatives stated to staff that the proposed signs would enhance their ability to lease the tenant space(s) in the Shops #8 building by providing signs facing the I-680 freeway. No other changes to the master sign program are proposed with this application.

Pleasanton Gateway Master Sign Program

PUD-02-07M

The PUD Development Plan for the Pleasanton Gateway shopping center defined general sign design criteria¹ for the shopping center's tenant and monument signs:

- No limitation on lettering style and colors.
- Tenant signs and logos were to be halo-lit or illuminated by gooseneck lamps.
- Only the Safeway "S" logo may be an internally illuminated face-lit sign.
- Painted window signs were allowed, but paper window signs were prohibited.
- Monument signs were limited to one low level monument sign facing the I-680 freeway or the I-680/northbound Bernal Avenue off-ramp, one sign facing Bernal Avenue, and one-sign facing Valley Avenue.
- The master sign program was to be reviewed by the Planning Commission at a public hearing.

At its public hearing and work sessions on the Pleasanton Gateway development, the Planning Commission commented that the project's signage should be covered by a comprehensive sign program, low-level monument signs should face City streets, flashy window signs should be avoided, the Safeway grocery store signs should be neighborhood oriented and not freeway oriented, and that any freeway signage would be a sensitive issue.

¹ Exhibit D is an excerpt from Ordinance 2014, Condition 37 for PUD-02-07M pertaining to Pleasanton Gateway signs.

The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of PUD-02-07M with the added condition that the comprehensive sign program for the Pleasanton Gateway development be subject to the Planning Commission's review and approval at a public hearing.

P11-0033, Original Sign Program

The Planning Commission approved P11-0033, the master sign program for the Pleasanton Gateway shopping center at a public hearing held on September 14, 2011. The master sign program allowed one illuminated wall-mounted sign and logo on the west side of the Safeway grocery store (installed and operating) and one illuminated wall-mounted sign on the west side of the Shops #8 building. The master sign program complied with the general requirements of PUD-02-07M for the shopping center, and with the Planning Commission's comments made at the public hearing on the PUD Development Plan to minimize the number and visibility of signs to the I-680 freeway.

P12-0794, Amended Sign Program

On November 30, 2012, the Zoning Administrator approved P12-0794, the amendment to the Pleasanton Gateway master sign program that added tenant sign locations, design standards for non-illuminated window signs, design standards for non-illuminated blade-mounted signs, and approved the building signs for the CVS pharmacy. The amended sign program also incorporated the approved signs for the Safeway grocery store and service station. Exhibit C is the master sign program with the revisions required by the Zoning Administrator's approval.

Staff forwarded the amended sign program to the Planning Commission on November 28, 2012 with the Zoning Administrator's action report. At the meeting, the Planning Commission asked staff if the amended master sign program added new signs facing the I-680 freeway. Staff replied that it did not. The Planning Commission did not appeal the Zoning Administrator's approval to a public hearing and the Zoning Administrator's approval of P12-0794 became effective.

Starbucks Coffee

Colliers International has entered into a lease agreement with Starbucks Coffee for approximately one-half of the Shops #8 building including the drive-through – uses permitted for this building and site by the Pleasanton Gateway PUD Development Plan. Starbucks has received building permits for tenant improvements and will be submitting its request for its tenant identification signs, menu/ordering board, and traffic control signs. Staff has discussed the master sign program with Starbucks representatives, stating that it can approve the Starbucks signs over-the-counter if they comply with the master sign program.

II. SITE DESCRIPTION

Figure 1 below is the 2005 aerial photograph/location map of the project site. Except for the construction of the Pleasanton Gateway development, the area has not changed since the 2005 aerial photograph was taken.



Figure 1: 2010 Aerial Photograph/Location Map

Table 1, below, describes the land uses surrounding the Shops #8 building:

Table 1, Surrounding Land Uses

Direction	Land Use
North (across Bernal Avenue)	Office and commercial uses including restaurants, retail, and personal services.
East	Safeway Service Station
South	Safeway grocery store
West	I-680/Bernal Avenue exit-ramp and I-680 freeway

Figure 2 below is the partial site plan from the master sign program (P12-0794) of the Pleasanton Gateway shopping center showing the Shops #8 building location and drive-through lane and monument sign locations on the shopping center site.

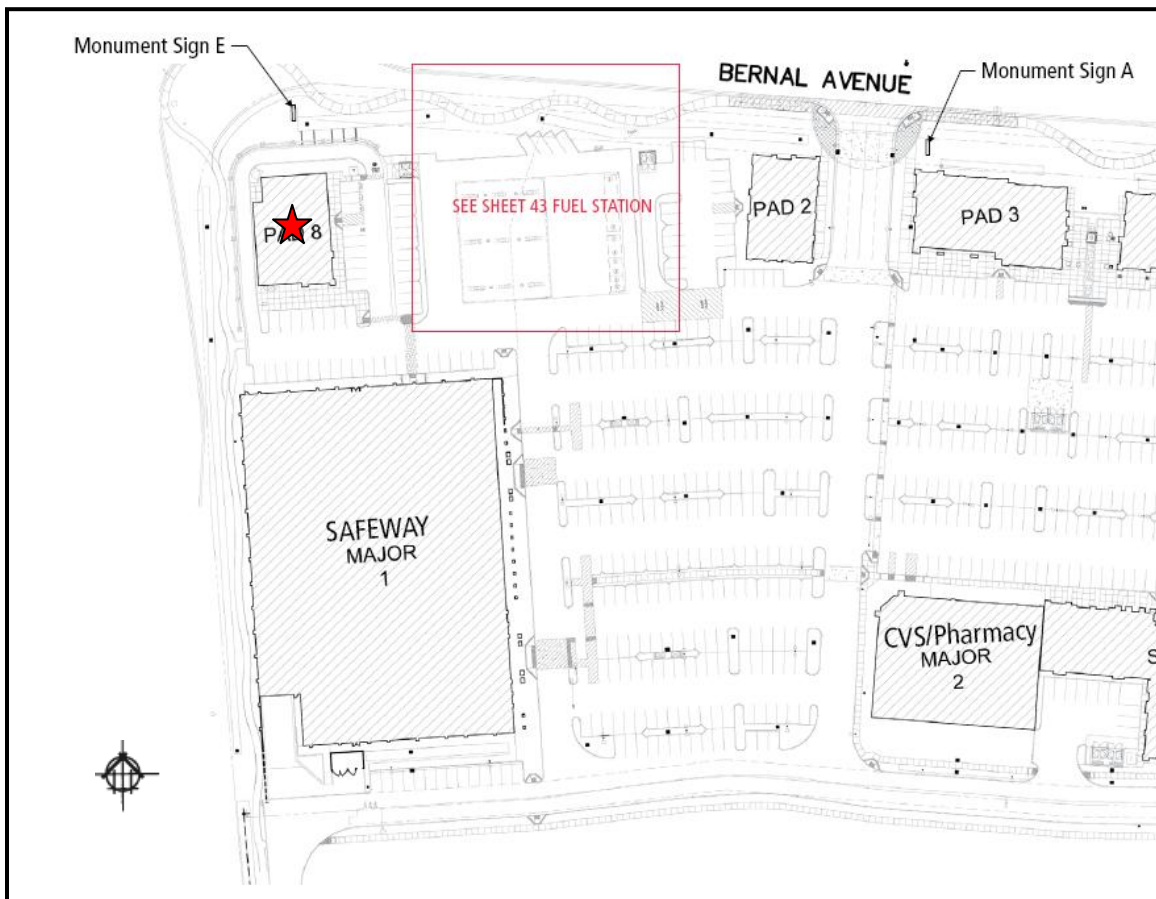


Figure 2: Shops #8 Location Map

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Proposed Amendment

The proposed amendment to the master sign program would add three tenant signs to the west side of the Shops #8 building.

The proposed signs would be in addition to the one sign already approved on the west side of this building facing the drive-through lane. If this amendment to the master sign program is approved, there could then be a total of up to four illuminated tenant signs with/without logos on the west side of this building facing the I-680/northbound Bernal Avenue off-ramp and the I-680 freeway. (The final number of signs would be based on the number of businesses leasing space in the Shops #8 building.)

Figure 3 and Figure 4 below compare the proposed tenant signs and approved tenant signs, respectively, on the west elevation of the Shops #8 building.



Figure 3: Shops #8 Proposed Signs



Figure 4: Shops #8 Approved Signs

Figure 5 below is a photograph of west building elevation of the Shops #8 building from the corner of Bernal Avenue and the I-680/northbound Bernal Avenue off-ramp showing the four locations for tenants and tenant signs on the Shops #8 building fascia. The figure also shows how the Shops #8 building could be divided into four separate tenant spaces. As stated previously, Starbucks Coffee has leased the two tenant spaces on the southerly half of this building. This figure also shows the drive-through window and low wall screening the drive-through lane from Bernal Avenue and the I-680/northbound Bernal Avenue off-ramp.

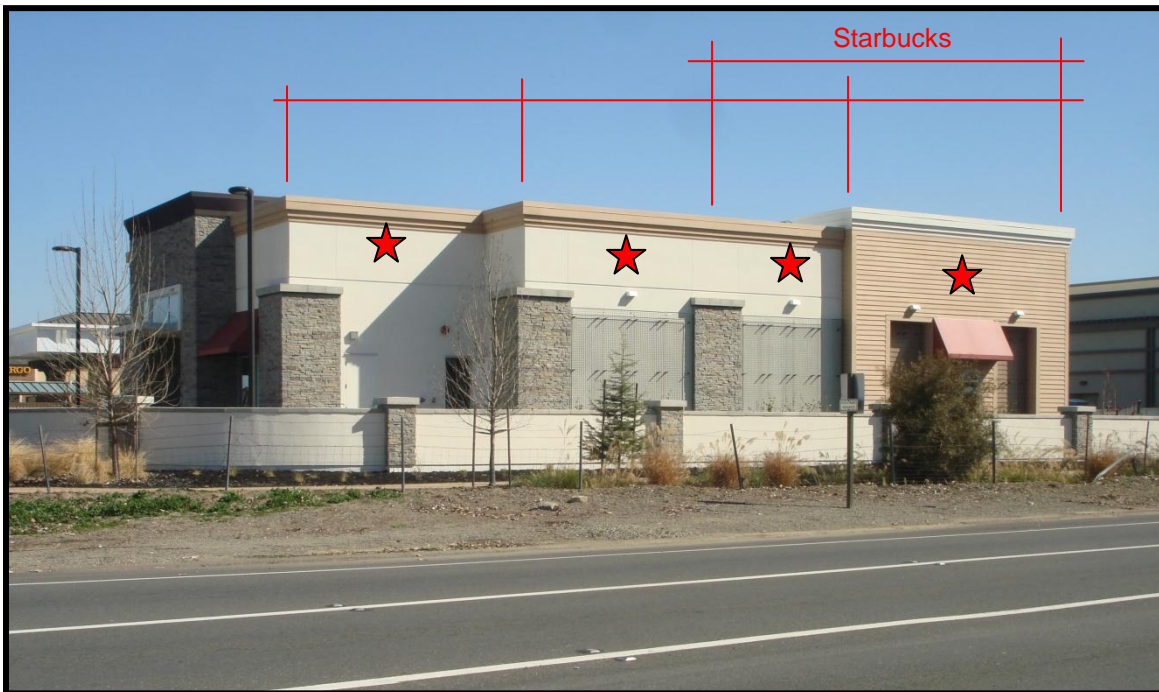


Figure 5: West Side of Shops #8 Building with Approved and Proposed Tenant Signs and Potential Tenant Locations

Approved Sign Standards

The proposal would not change the details of the approved master sign program on design, mounting, and illumination set forth in the amended master sign program. A summary of these design standards follows.

- One sign per building side per tenant in the sign locations shown on the buildings by the approved master sign program. Referring to Figure 5, above, Starbucks would not be able to add a second sign this west side of the Shops #8 building even if the sign amendment is approved.
- Tenant sign area including logos is 1.0 square foot per linear foot of the width of the tenant space applied to each frontage separately. Tenants are not allowed to combine or consolidate sign areas from separate frontages, i.e., combining the

sign areas from separate building frontages to enable a larger sign on a single frontage.

- The maximum height for tenant signs is 30 inches. A 6-inch² “drop” is also allowed for lower case letters, such as, g, j, p, q, and y.
- The maximum length of the tenant sign including logos shall be 67-percent of the width of the tenant space.
- All tenant signs including tenant logos shall be composed of “halo-lit” letters or “flood-lit” letters illuminated by gooseneck lamps. A logo may be composed of “edge-lit” letters with an opaque face and pushed-through an opaque background.
- No limitation on sign colors or lettering styles.
- Prohibited signs include paper window signs, stake-mounted signs placed in the perimeter landscape areas, banners not associated with a grand opening, or any type of a temporary sign not associated with a shopping center event.

IV. ANALYSIS

An amendment to a master sign program is normally approved by the Zoning Administrator and then forwarded to the Planning Commission on the Zoning Administrator’s Action Report. Staff is forwarding this application to the Planning Commission because it: 1) proposes new signs not previously reviewed by the Planning Commission, and 2) because the three new signs would increase the total number of shopping center signs visible to the I-680 freeway, a concern expressed by the Planning Commission with its review of the Pleasanton Gateway shopping center.

P12-0794 originally proposed the three tenant signs on the west side of the Shops #8 building. Staff discussed this proposal with the previous applicant (Property Development Center), stating that the three additional Shops #8 signs would not be supported, and that they would have to be reviewed by the Planning Commission at a public hearing. The applicant decided to remove the three Shops #8 signs from the previous proposal and re-submitted the signs under a separate application for review by the Planning Commission at a public hearing.

It is the cumulative visibility of the number of signs to the I-680 freeway that concerns staff. Even though Starbucks is limited to one sign as previously approved by the shopping center sign program, there could be a total of four tenant signs on the west side of the Shops #8 building facing the I-680 freeway if Starbucks were to be replaced by two separate businesses.

² Page 7 of Exhibit C will be revised to state the 6-inch drop for lower case letters.

Staff conducted several windshield surveys of this building from the northbound and southbound directions of the I-680 freeway to determine the potential visibility of the proposed signs to the freeway, and found that the visibility of the proposed signs would vary – partially visible from the southbound travel lanes of the freeway to becoming entirely visible from the northbound travel lanes of the freeway.

Commercial signs that now face the I-680 freeway include monument identification signs, such as the Bernal Business Park Sign, office tenant signs on the building parapet walls of the mid-rise office buildings on both sides of the I-680 freeway, and signs for some Johnson Drive businesses by Commerce Drive. The common feature of these signs is that they are separated from each other and from the I-680 freeway by a distance that reduces their cumulative visibility and intensity to the freeway.

The buildings of the Pleasanton Gateway shopping center and the tenant spaces within these buildings were designed and constructed to be oriented towards Bernal Avenue and Valley Avenue – this also includes building and monument signs. The Safeway grocery store, as the shopping center's anchor business, is an exception and was allowed to have a building sign facing the I-680 freeway. However, with the first sign program staff worked with Safeway representatives to reduce the height and length of the sign and logo.

Staff believes that the tenant signs now allowed for the Shops #8 building provide adequate identification for customers approaching the tenant spaces from Bernal Avenue and from within the shopping center, and that the three proposed signs would begin to introduce an element of sign clutter visible to the I-680 freeway. Staff, therefore, recommends denial of the applicant's request. However, should the Commission find that the three new signs are appropriate; staff has included conditions of approval as Exhibit A for the Planning Commission's consideration.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public notices were sent to all property owners and tenants that received notices of the previous applications for the Pleasanton Gateway shopping center. Exhibit D is a copy of the noticing area. Staff has not received any verbal or written communications from the noticed property owners and/or tenants as of the writing of the staff report. Any comments or concerns from the adjacent owners or tenants will be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

VI. CONCLUSION

The master sign program for the Pleasanton Gateway shopping center achieves a coordinated sign and graphics program for the shopping center enhancing the shopping center's appearance to this gateway entrance to the City. The shopping center's sign program has identified the shopping center's tenants primarily to Bernal Avenue and to Valley Avenue, reflecting the center's design, and following the Planning Commission's direction for minimal project and tenant signs facing the I-680 freeway. The proposed

signs would begin to introduce an element of sign clutter and glare that would be visible to the I-680 freeway. Staff, therefore, does not support the applicant's proposal.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The proposal is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Class 11 Categorical Exemption, Section 1531103(a), On-Premise Sign, of the CEQA Guidelines. The Class 11 exemption would cover new or modified standards to a master sign program. Therefore, no new environmental document accompanies this staff report.

VIII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission deny P12-1797. However, should the Commission find that the three new signs are appropriate, staff has included conditions of approval as Exhibit A for the Planning Commission's consideration.

Staff Planner: Marion Pavan, (925) 931-5610, mpavan@ci.pleasanton.ca.us