

## Planning Commission Staff Report

---

February 27, 2013  
Item 6.d.

- SUBJECT:** Appeal of P12-1791
- APPLICANT/  
APPELLANT:** Rajitha Sumanasekera, Little Flowers Montessori
- PROPERTY OWNER:** Sim & Yoon LLC
- PURPOSE:** Appeal of the Zoning Administrator's denial for Sign Design Review to retain a non-approved but already installed non-illuminated wall-mounted sign.
- LOCATION:** 3550 Bernal Avenue, Suites 115, 120, and 125
- GENERAL PLAN:** Retail/Highway/Service Commercial; Business and Professional Offices.
- ZONING:** PUD-C-N (Planned Unit Development – Commercial - Neighborhood) District.
- EXHIBITS:**
- A. Draft Conditions of Approval
  - B. Site and Wall Sign Plans dated "Received November 27, 2012"
  - C. Zoning Administrator's Denial Letter dated "December 18, 2012"
  - D. Letter of Appeal dated "Received January 2, 2013"
  - E. Vintage Hills Shopping Center Comprehensive Sign Program and Amendments
  - F. Location and Noticing Maps

---

### BACKGROUND

On February 22, 2012, the Planning Commission approved Rajitha Sumanasekera's request for a Conditional Use Permit (Case No. P11-0859) to operate Little Flowers Montessori at 3550 Bernal Avenue, Suites 115, 120, and 125, within the Vintage Hills Shopping Center.

On October 17, 2012, Cal-Neon Signs received over-the-counter approval from the City for one illuminated wall-mounted tenant sign to be installed over the entry of Little Flowers Montessori's tenant spaces that conformed to the Vintage Hills Shopping Center's comprehensive sign program. During Little Flowers Montessori's final inspection for its tenant improvements in November 2012, staff observed an additional sign that was installed without City approval: a non-illuminated wall-mounted sign located adjacent to the entry of the tenant space. Staff informed Mr. Sumanasekera to either remove the sign or apply and receive

approval from the City for a modification to amend shopping center’s comprehensive sign program to retain the sign.

On November 27, 2012, Mr. Sumanasekera submitted an application to retain the non-illuminated, wall-mounted sign. The Zoning Administrator determined that: (1) the sign is located on a wall of Suite 110, a tenant space that is not associated with Little Flowers Montessori, which is located in Suites 115, 120, and 125; (2) Little Flowers Montessori already has approved tenant signage above its associated tenant spaces that provides adequate business identification; and (3) the wall sign is not consistent with the comprehensive sign program for Vintage Hills Shopping Center. Therefore, the application was denied (please refer to Exhibit C). Mr. Sumanasekera filed an appeal of the Zoning Administrator’s denial to retain the non-illuminated, wall-mounted sign and, accordingly, the appeal is now before the Planning Commission for review and action. Please refer to Exhibit D for the letter of appeal.

### **SITE AND BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

The subject site is located on the east side of Bernal Avenue and south of Tawny Drive (please refer to Figure 1 on page 3). The subject building is one story and approximately 47,401 square feet in area and is at a higher grade level than Tawny Drive and Bernal Avenue. The main entrance to the site is from Bernal Avenue with additional access being provided from Tawny Drive and Palomino Drive. Little Flowers Montessori is located in three combined suites within the building, Suites 115, 120, and 125. Other businesses currently within the shopping center include: a hair cutting salon (Cutt Company), a spa (Nirvana Day Spa), a frozen yogurt shop (Yogoholic), a laundry and dry cleaning shop (Vintage Hills Cleaners), a jewelry store (Gold N Time), a sushi restaurant (Kokoro Sushi), a 24-hour fitness facility (Anytime Fitness), and a coffee shop (Coffee Ali). Staff notes that New Leaf Market is currently undergoing tenant improvements to occupy the vacant grocery store space.

**Figure 1: Aerial View**



**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

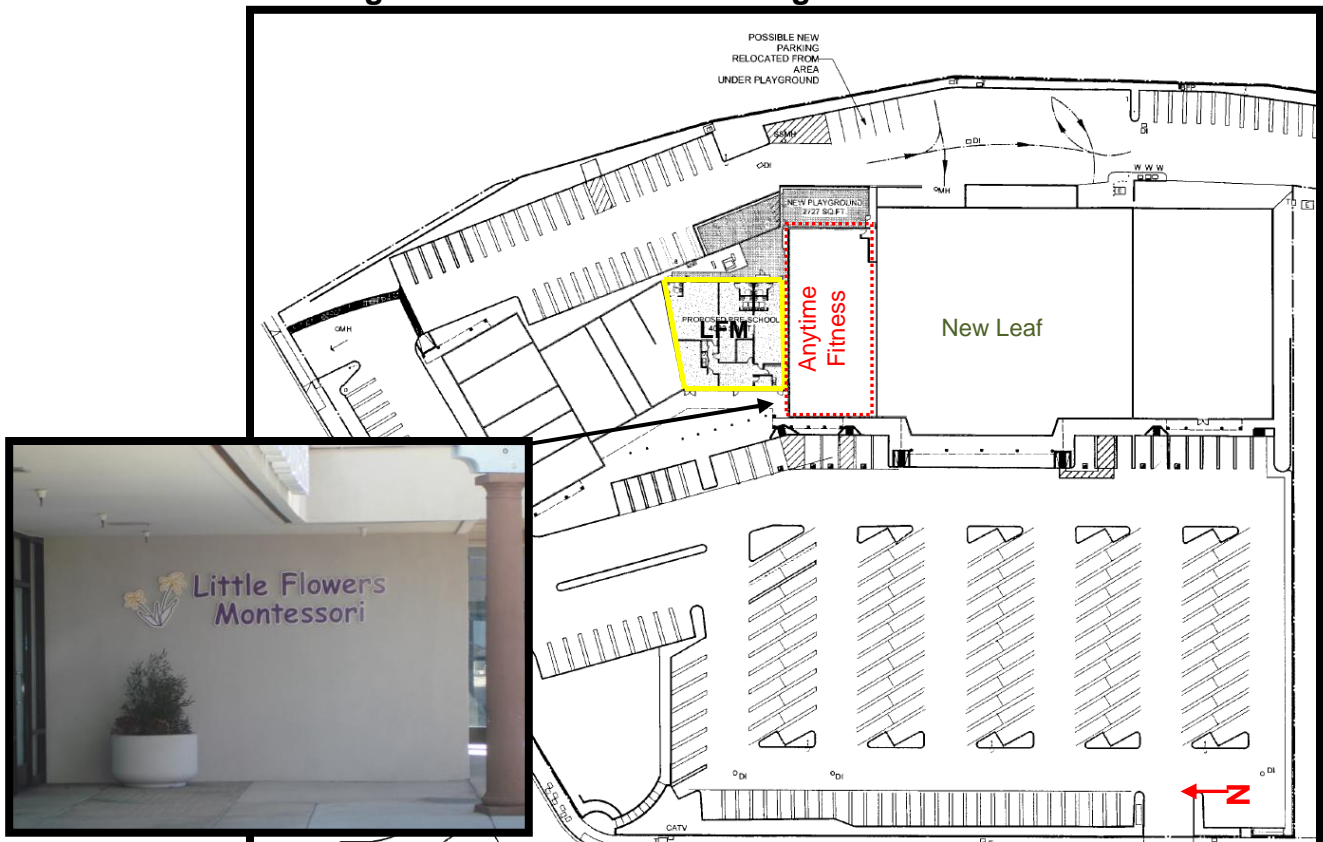
Little Flowers Montessori received approval to install one 18-inch tall, 22-foot 5-inch long, internally illuminated sign above the child care center. Please refer to Figure 2 below for the photograph of the approved sign. The applicant is requesting to retain the 2-foot tall, 9-foot, 5-inch long, double stacked, non-illuminated, wall-mounted sign located adjacent to Little Flower Montessori’s main tenant entrance. Although the applicant shares a common wall with the adjacent use, Anytime Fitness, the portion of the wall where the sign is located is on a portion of Anytime Fitness’s wall that is not a shared wall. Please refer to Figure 3 on page 4 for the picture of the wall-mounted sign and its location.

**Figure 2: Approved Tenant Sign**



**Please refer to the next page for Figure 3**

**Figure 3: Tenant Walls and Sign Location**



## ANALYSIS

The comprehensive sign program for Vintage Hills Shopping Center was approved at staff level on July 14, 2008. The sign program allows one internally illuminated channel letter sign above the tenant space of each business. On September 25, 2009, staff approved an amendment to the sign program to allow Yogoholic, a corner tenant space, an additional tenant sign facing Bernal Avenue. On March 22, 2011, staff approved a second amendment to the sign program to increase the maximum length of proposed signs to not exceed 70 percent of the storefront fascia and to allow logos up to 24-inches in height, but not to exceed 25 percent of the total sign area. The sign program, with amendments, is similar to other sign programs approved for other shopping centers in Pleasanton (e.g., Gateway Square in Hacienda Business Park, Hopyard Village, Valley Plaza, Meadow Plaza, etc.) where one tenant sign is allowed per tenant space that is not located in a corner suite. A copy of the Vintage Hills Shopping Center's approved sign program and amendments is included as Exhibit E.

Staff believes that it is not appropriate to have the wall-mounted sign on the adjacent tenant's wall and that the existing fascia-mounted sign for Little Flowers Montessori provides adequate tenant identification for cars approaching the tenant space. If pedestrian-oriented signage is desired, staff believes there are better options, such as adding blade signs mounted below the soffit adjacent to the tenant entry or window signage, which would be reviewed as part of a comprehensive sign program modification applicable to all tenants in the shopping center rather than to a single tenant to ensure that the locations and design are appropriate.

However, should the Commission find that the wall-mounted sign is appropriate; staff has included conditions of approval as Exhibit A for the Commission's consideration.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice of this appeal was sent to surrounding property owners and tenants within a 1,000-foot radius of the site. At the time this report was published, staff had not received comments regarding this appeal. The location and noticing maps are included as Exhibit F.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, Section 15311, Accessory Structures, Class 1(a), on-premise signs. Therefore, no environmental document accompanies this report.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission deny the appeal of P12-1791, thereby upholding the Zoning Administrator's denial of the wall-mounted sign.

Staff Planner: Natalie Amos, Associate Planner, 925.931.5613, [namos@cityofpleasantonca.gov](mailto:namos@cityofpleasantonca.gov)