

# Agenda Report

**TO: CITY COUNCIL      DATE: JANUARY 26, 1997**

**FROM: PHILIP A. HAWKEY, CITY MANAGER**

**SUBJECT: ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARDS FOR ON-PREMISES  
SIGNS AND AMENDMENT TO ALLOW STAFF-LEVEL REVIEWS  
OF APPLICATIONS TO DEMOLISH ARCHITECTURALLY  
INSIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS OVER 50 YEARS OLD WITHIN  
THE NORTH LAKE SPECIFIC PLAN OVERLAY DISTRICT**

---

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Acknowledge that the activity is exempt from CEQA under the general rule, CEQA Guidelines Section 16051 (b) (3). Direct City Clerk to file Notice of Exemption with Los Angeles County (Attachment 1).
2. Hold first reading of an ordinance of the City of Pasadena Municipal Code, establishing standards for on-premises signs for the North Lake Specific Plan Overlay District (Attachment 2)
3. Refer the ordinance of the City of Pasadena Municipal Code authorizing staff-level reviews of applications to demolish architecturally insignificant buildings over 50 years old within the North Lake Specific Plan Overlay District to the Planning Commission.

**BACKGROUND:** On November 26, 1996, the City Council adopted the North Lake Specific Plan. On September 29, 1997, the City Council adopted an ordinance to establish development standards, development incentives, and design standards to implement the adopted North Lake Specific Plan. Following adoption of the ordinances for the Specific Plan, the subject of signage became an emerging issue. Specifically, the need for the City Council to consider the establishment of standards for on-premises signs for the North Lake Specific Plan Overlay District is in response to the ongoing concern for the present and future appearance of the corridor (see the Analysis section for further details). During the course of the planning and public participation process of the Specific Plan, the subject of signage was discussed minimally (as far back as the self-guided tours in conjunction with the "Bluebook Workbooks") in comparison with the heightened interest in other areas of concern addressed by the Specific Plan--land use strategies, development standards/design standards, public safety, economic opportunities, and mobility, just to name a few.

However, there are two elements that were added to the approved design review checklist for the entire Specific Plan area that are intended to help improve the appearance of signage along the corridor. These elements, both taken from the design guidelines for signs in the Central District, are one prohibiting illuminated white backgrounds for cabinet signs and a similar prohibition against internally illuminated awnings and canopies.

On January 14, 1998, the Planning Commission unanimously approved recommendation no. 1 which references the environmental documentation and recommendation no. 2 which references the ordinance establishing standards for on-premises signs for the North Lake Specific Plan Overlay District. However, recommendation no. 3 which references the ordinance to authorize staff-level reviews of architecturally insignificant buildings over 50 years old within the Plan area was not approved. *The Planning Commission determined that the subject of 50-year demolition reviews deserves a "closer look" as a separate item in that it is not related to the signage issue. Therefore, staff will return to the Planning Commission with a separate report on the amendment to the Cultural Heritage Ordinance, and a separate Agenda Report to the City Council will follow.*

**ANALYSIS:** The application of sign standards for the North Lake Specific Plan Overlay District was not revisited until the issue was raised recently for further staff study by Planning Commissioner Margaret Thomas. Subsequently, Councilmember Bill Crowfoot requested that staff return to the City Council with an ordinance to implement the CD sign regulations (Attachment 2) for the area during the City Council meeting in September. The request came at a time amid growing concern that new sign proposals should be held to the spirit of the Specific Plan. Prior to Councilmember Crowfoot's request, the Special Sign CL Base District regulations applied to the corridor in two areas; the area between Elizabeth Street and Ladera Street; and Mountain Street and Orange Grove Boulevard. The proposed adoption of the subject ordinance would repeal these regulations, and the more stringent CD sign regulations (Attachment 4) would apply to the entire area.

For discussion purposes, the following examples are provided to highlight how the regulations are more restrictive than the Special Sign CL District regulations:

**Freestanding Signs** - *the Special Sign District states that the maximum height is not to project over the roof of a building to a maximum of 20 feet. The CD sign regulations allow a maximum height of 8 feet. These signs must be set within a landscaped area of at least 75 square feet.*

**Wall Signs** - *the Special Sign District does not allow a maximum number. The CD sign regulations permits two signs per ground floor occupancy.*

**Roof Signs** - *Not permitted in either of the two districts.*

For a comprehensive look at how the CD regulations compare to the remaining standards for on-premises and off-premises signs, Attachment 5 - Sign Regulations has been included.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:** The proposed activity is covered by the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which 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.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposal to implement the CD sign regulations for the North Lake Specific Plan Overlay District addresses a growing concern that new sign proposals should be held to the spirit of the Specific Plan to help enhance the corridor's overall appearance. The Specific Plan speaks very generally about signage in the District, the enactment of the Ordinance to establish the on-premises sign standards takes the next very important step beyond the Plan to improve the aesthetics of the area.

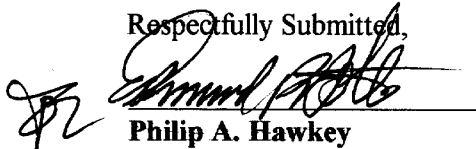
## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The fiscal impact will be minimal. Only a small number of sign applications for design review are anticipated. The thresholds for design review throughout North Lake exempt most replacement or new signs from design review (they have to be part of a "substantial rehabilitation" project in some areas or new construction in others).

## **WORKLOAD IMPACT**

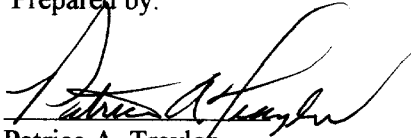
No significant additional workload impact is anticipated, the work will be absorbed under the current workforce in the Design and Historic Preservation Section. Code Enforcement Staff will need to become acclimated to the new sign standards for the area through a section matrix designed to help enforce the regulations.

Respectfully Submitted,



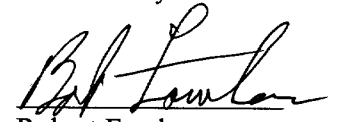
**Philip A. Hawkey**  
City Manager

Prepared by:

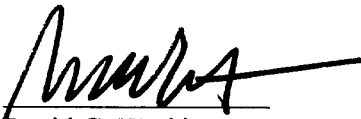


Patrice A. Traylor  
Senior Planner

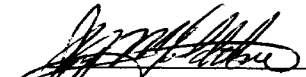
Reviewed by:



Robert Fowler  
Acting Director of Planning  
and Permitting



David G. Watkins  
Planning Manager



Jay M. Goldstone  
Director of Finance

Attachments:

1. Notice of Exemption and  
Notice of Determination
2. Ordinance Establishing Standards  
for on-premises signs for the North  
Lake Specific Plan Overlay District
3. Ordinance amendment authorizing  
staff-level reviews of applications  
to demolish architecturally insignificant  
buildings over 50 years old within the  
North Lake Specific Plan District
4. CD Sign Regulations
5. Sign Regulations