

May 28, 2003

To: Sutter County Planning Commission

Re: Agenda Item #7: Public hearing on Zoning Code Amendment #03-01 to regulate billboard signs; located Countywide; initiated by the County of Sutter

Current Proposal

A. Project Description:

The project is an amendment to the Sutter County Zoning Code pertaining to the regulation of billboard signs.

B. Environmental Consideration:

The proposed ordinance amendment will result in further restrictions on the size and height of off-site advertising signs (billboards) within specified zone districts. The project is therefore considered categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15305, Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations.

Background

At its October 2, 2002 meeting, the Planning Commission voted to recommend that the Board of Supervisors consider a Zoning Code amendment to eliminate provisions allowing for off-site billboard advertising signs. On February 11, 2003, staff took to the Board of Supervisors the request to initiate a Zoning Code Amendment to eliminate off-site billboard advertising signs. At that meeting, the Board directed staff to prepare a Zoning Code amendment to eliminate off-site advertising signs greater than 32 square feet in size (See Exhibit A for Board meeting minutes). In taking this action, the Board in effect defined billboard signs as having a size greater than 32 square feet.

Staff Comments

Zoning Code Section 1500-9885AA(n) defines an off-site sign as “a sign that advertises or informs in any manner, businesses, services, goods, persons, or events at a building site or location other than that upon which the sign is located. Off premise sign, billboard, and outdoor advertising structure are equivalent terms.” The Zoning Code currently allows for off-site advertising signs with approval of a use permit in the agricultural zone districts (i.e. AG, A-2, FPARC, etc.), in the Commercial-Industrial (C-M) zone, and within the Light Industrial (M-1) and General Industrial (M-2) zone districts.

Within the agricultural zones, the Zoning Code currently permits one double-faced sign per property, with a maximum permitted size of 32 square feet and a maximum height of 8 feet. Signs within these areas may only serve as directional signs to a nearby use which is also located within an agricultural district and the text of the signs are limited to the name, nature and logo of the business it is directing vehicle traffic to. Based on the Board’s discussion and action at the February meeting, it appears that off-site signs within agricultural zones do not generate significant aesthetic concerns. Therefore, staff is not recommending any changes to provisions for off-site signs in the agricultural zones. As currently provided for in the Zoning Code, off-site signs in the agricultural districts will still require approval of a use permit and will be limited to 32 square feet in height and a maximum height of 8 feet. These signs are allowed to have external or internal lighting.

Within the Commercial-Industrial (C-M), Light Industrial (M-1), and General Industrial (M-2) zone districts, a maximum off-site sign area of 300 square feet and a maximum sign height of 30 feet are currently permitted. Signs of this size and height are more commonly considered to be “billboard” signs and typically generate aesthetic concerns. Based on the Board’s direction, staff recommends that the same area and height restrictions on off-site signs in agricultural areas (32 square feet in area, 8 feet in height) now be placed on off-site signs within the C-M, M-1, and M-2 zone districts. Off-site signs within these zone districts will still require approval of a use permit, with a maximum permitted size of 32 square feet and a maximum height of 8 feet.

The provisions for number of off-site signs permitted per property will still be based on the existing locational requirements specified in the Code (minimum distance of 1,000 feet from another off-site sign on same side of street and 500 feet apart if located on opposite sides of the street). Also, no changes are proposed to the allowed lighting for these signs (internally illuminated signs not permitted; externally illuminated signs permitted, with no moving parts). Staff has included applicable pages from the sign ordinance section of the Zoning Code (Section 1500-9485c & d), showing the current text with strike out and the proposed text in *italics* (See Exhibit B).

Recommended Findings

Based on the information contained in the agenda report and /or testimony received at the public hearing, the Commission finds:

- A. In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this project is categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15305, Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations.
- B. The proposed Zoning Code amendment will provide for additional regulation of off-site advertising (billboard) signs, which are permitted with approval of a use permit in certain zone districts. The proposed changes will result in a reduction in size and height of these signs, reducing the potential aesthetic impacts created by the signs. The proposed changes are consistent with the Sutter County Zoning Code and General Plan.

Recommended Action

- A. Adopt the recommended findings
- B. Recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the Board:
 - 1. Adopt the recommended findings.
 - 2. Approve proposed Zoning Code Amendment #03-01.

Sincerely,
LISA WILSON
INTERIM PLANNING DIVISION CHIEF

Steve Geiger
Associate Planner

Attachments: Exhibit A - February 11, 2003 Board of Supervisors meeting minutes
Exhibit B - Proposed changes to Zoning Code text

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