



City of Sebastopol Design Review Board Staff Report

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Meeting Date: November 4, 2015
Agenda Item: 8A
To: Design Review Board
From: Jonathan Atkinson, Assistant Planner
Subject: Minor Sign Review: Wall Sign for Whole Body
Recommendation: Continue for Redesign
Applicant/Owner: Ad Art / Bruce Friend
File Number: 2015-103
Address: 6960 McKinley Street
CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption: Section 15311: Class 11
General Plan: Downtown Core
Zoning: CD: Downtown Core

Introduction:

This is a Minor Sign Review application, requesting approval for a sign that was installed without a Sign Permit for Whole Body at 6960 McKinley Street. The site was formerly home to Box Office Video, a video store, which closed after years of operation in Sebastopol. Whole Food Market expanded into the adjacent tenant space to operate Whole Body, a department that offers personal care products, which opened in October 2015.

On September 1, 2015, a representative of Ad Art called the Planning Department, regarding Sign Permit requirements for an internally illuminated wall sign for Whole Body. Staff informed the representative via phone and email that a sign with internal illumination requires Design Review Board approval of a Sign Review application.

On September 28, 2015, staff noticed that Whole Body installed an internally illuminated wall sign without a Sign Permit. On October 7, 2015, staff issued a letter informing Whole Body that they are in violation of the Sign Ordinance. Ad Art submitted an application for Sign Review on behalf of Whole Body, as a result.

Project Description:

The application involves the following sign: One internally illuminated wall sign that measures 11 inches by 12 feet and 4 inches, has an approximate sign area of 11 square feet, bears the image of leaves, and reads: "Whole Body." The sign consists of channel letters.



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Environmental Review:

The application is categorically exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15311, Class 11, which exempts the installation of on-premise signs.

Zoning Ordinance Consistency:

The application is subject to the following provisions of the Zoning Ordinance:

Section 17.230.050.A: General Sign Standards and Regulations

The maximum sign area permitted for 6960 McKinley Street is 32 ½ square feet.

The sign has an approximate sign area of 11 square feet, which is substantially below the maximum allowable sign area. The application is consistent with this requirement.

Section 17.230.050 C: Lighting of Signs

(1) No sign shall be illuminated with such intensity as to prevent normal perception of objects, buildings, streets and other signs in the immediate area.

The application involves a sign that faces a small parking lot in the Downtown Core. The sign is internally illuminated but perception within the immediate area is maintained. The application is consistent with this requirement.

(2) External illumination is preferred over internal illumination in all Zoning Districts. Internally illuminated signs must be reviewed and approved by the Design Review Board, and are generally not allowed within the CD: Downtown Core district, within any residential district, or in proximity to an existing residential use.

The Sign Ordinance does not explicitly restrict signs with internal illumination but does state that signs with external illumination are preferred in all Zoning Districts, and the site is located in the CD: Downtown Core District. The Board has approved some signs with internal illumination in the past but has recently expressed a strong preference for signs with external illumination. The Board will need to determine if internal illumination is suitable for the sign and location. Given prior Board discussion, the Board may wish to provide



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direction for redesign without internal illumination. Alternatively, the Board may feel that the sign with internal illumination is acceptable.

(3) No backlighting of the panel(s) is allowed on internally illuminated signs unless the background has been rendered opaque, allowing light through the letters and logo only. This limitation does not apply to theater marquee signs or similar signs, as determined by the Planning Director.

The sign only consists of internally illuminated channel letters. The application is consistent with this requirement.

Section 17.230.060 C: Signs Permitted in Commercial and Office Districts

(2) A maximum of 2 window, awning, wall, or fascia business identification signs are permitted for each ground floor use or tenant. One of those 2 signs may be a projecting sign, providing that the sign does not exceed 6 square feet in area or 18" in height, and has a minimum clearance of 7 1/2' above the sidewalk.

The application involves the installation of one sign. The application is consistent with this requirement.

Public Comment:

The Planning Department has not received any comments on the application from the public as of writing this report.

City Departmental Comment:

The Planning Department has not received any City department comments on the application as of writing this report.

Required Findings:

Design Review: Section 17.310.030.B.2 of the Zoning Ordinance states the following: "In considering an application for design review, the Design Review Board, or the Planning Director, as the case may be, shall determine whether the design of the proposal would be compatible with the neighborhood and with the general visual character of Sebastopol; the design provides appropriate transitions and relationships to adjacent properties and the public right of way; it would not impair the desirability of investment or occupation in the neighborhood; the design is internally consistent and harmonious; and the



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design is in conformity with any guidelines and standards adopted pursuant to this Chapter.”

Analysis:

The application involves a request to approve an internally illuminated wall sign for Whole Body, which was installed without a Sign Permit. Ad Art submitted an application on behalf of Whole Body in an effort to bring the sign into compliance with the Sign Ordinance. While the Zoning Ordinance does not restrict internal illumination, it is discouraged in the Downtown Core, and within and in proximity to residential areas. The Board has approved some signs with internal illumination in the past but has recently expressed a strong preference for signs with external illumination.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends continuation of the application for redesign given that the Board has expressed a strong desire for externally illuminated signage, especially in the Downtown Core.

Alternatively, the Board may find that the sign is suitable for the site and wish to approve the application. Staff has prepared findings and conditions of approval in the event that the Board wishes to approve the application.

Findings for Minor Sign Review (Application 2015-103) approval to install one illuminated wall sign for Whole Body at 6960 McKinley Street:

1. That the sign is categorically exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to Section 15311, Class 11, which exempts the installation of on-premise signs.
2. That the sign is consistent with the Zoning Ordinance in that it complies with the applicable provisions set forth in the Sign Ordinance.
3. That the sign is compatible with the site and neighborhood in that it enhances the facade of an existing building in the Downtown Core, and is similar to existing signage within proximity, which contain channel letters.
4. That the sign is internally consistent and harmonious in that it contains the same font, graphic design elements, and colors.
5. That the sign provides appropriate transitions and relationships to the site and adjacent tenant spaces in that the sign is appropriately proportional to the building frontage and is of similar size to wall signs in the Down-



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town Core.

Conditions of Approval:

1. This Sign Permit is valid for a period of two (2) years. However the applicant may request one one-year extension of this approval from the Planning Director, pursuant to Zoning Ordinance Section 17.250.050. If the signs are not installed within the designated time frame, the approval will be considered null and void with no further action required on the part of the City.
2. The sign(s) shall be installed consistent with the application materials date-stamped October 21, 2015. No other signs regulated by the Sign Ordinance shall be installed or displayed without the prior written approval of the Planning Department.
3. An Encroachment Permit may be required prior to installation of the sign. Please contact the Engineering Department prior to installation if work will be performed, or materials placed, in the public right-of-way. The phone number for the Engineering Department is (707) 823-2151.
4. A Building Permit is required for the installation of most signs. Please contact the Building Department for Building Permit application information at (707) 823-8597.

Attachments:

- Master Planning Application Form
- Sign Review Submittal

