



STAFF REPORT
4/6/2022

TO: Planning Commission Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Nikki Gomez, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: Electronic freeway-oriented outdoor advertising sign – 85901 Vista Del Norte

SPECIFICS: Variance No. 22-01 and Use Interpretation for an electronic freeway-oriented outdoor advertising sign at 40’ high to be located to the west corner of the property at 85901 Vista Del Norte (APN: 603-102-025.) visible from I-10 Freeway in the C-G Zone (General Commercial) zone. Foxpoint Interactive, LLC (Applicant)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt Resolution No. PC 2022-08 approving Variance No. 22-01 pursuant to the findings and conditions of approval contained in the resolution and an interpretation the electronic/digital billboard sign is similar to an electronic message board.

BACKGROUND:

The project is located within a 1.03-acre site on the same site as an existing church “Family Worship Center” at 85901 Vista Del Norte. The existing church is located at the east portion of the site, while the proposed sign to be located at the west portion of the site. The proposed 40’ high electronic freeway-oriented outdoor advertising sign will be visible from the I-10 Freeway. The sign structure will have the capability of projecting images, electronic billboard sign.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The applicant, Foxpoint Interactive, LLC, has submitted a request for a Variance to allow a freeway-oriented outdoor advertising sign, considered as outdoor advertising sign, within 600’ feet from a church on the same property.. The request



also includes Use Interpretation for the proposed electronic sign be similar in use as an electronic message board.

The electronic images projected on the proposed sign will function like an electronic/digital billboard sign. The electronic billboard are computer-controlled electronic displays on the specified sign area with advertising image/content rotating in a slide show fashion for six to ten seconds. The image projected electronic billboard sign will be a still image and will only move/shift during the transition from on image to the other. There will be no flickering, flashing or animation on the images itself. The billboard image projected on the proposed sign structure will be of advertising services, goods and may be utilized by City of Coachella for travelers of events, emergencies and other relevant information.

The sign structure is a free standing, freeway-oriented outdoor sign with an overall height of 40 feet. There are two signs with dimensions 14 feet x 48 feet placed back-to-back held by a pipe metal column visible from I-10 freeway.

Table 1 shows the proposed sign’s consistency with the Municipal Code Chapter 5.48 Outdoor Advertising Signs standards.

Table 1 – Development/Operational Standards

	Zoning Ordinance	Proposed	Complies with Code
Location	Outdoor Advertising sign which conform with the provisions of this chapter shall be permitted as a matter of right in the C-G, M-H, and M-S zones	C-G Zone	Yes
Setbacks	No outdoor advertising sign shall be established closer to the street than the existing property line. No portion of any outdoor advertising sign shall may be placed on, or extended over the right-of-way line any street or highway.	All portion of advertising sign is within property line	Yes
Height	No ground sign may exceed forty (40) feet in height about eh roadbed of the adjacent freeway unless a variance is secured from the Planning Commission	40’	Yes
Size of Signs	The area of any one sign facing, shall be seven hindered (700) square feet inclusive of any border or trim, but excluding the base and apron, supports and other structural members	672 square feet	Yes

Distance Restriction	The distance between outdoor advertising signs on the same side of a freeway shall be five hundred (500) feet. No outdoor advertising sign shall be placed or maintained within one hundred (100) feet of any building structure.	Nearest Billboard sign is 1,300 feet and building within the property is 500 feet away	Yes
General Provision – Resembling any official marker	No outdoor advertising shall be constructed which resembles any official marker erected by the city, state or any governmental agency, or which by reason of position, shape or color would conflict with a proper functioning of any traffic sign or signal.	No resemblance of any official marker	Conditioned to incorporate branded city identification approved by the city’s Public Information Officer.
Location	Outdoor advertising signs shall not be established at any location within six hundred (600) feet of any property which is used for parks, public schools, church, courthouse, city hall or public museum	Sign is within property where an existing church is located	No, therefore the applicant is requesting for Variance

Variance:

As identified under Municipal Code 5.48.040 General Provisions, Section A, an outdoor advertising sign shall not be within 600 feet from any property within a church. The applicant requests Variance approval since the proposed sign is to be installed within the same property as the “Family Worship Center” church, within the 600 foot minimum distance requirement. The subject property is triangular shape and the proposed sign is 400 feet away for the church building located at farthest west corner, the narrowest point of the project site.

In order for the Commission must make all the following findings in the affirmative, as specified in Section 17.76.020-B of the City Zoning Code.

- *That the strict application of the provisions of this chapter would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of the chapter.*
- *That there are special circumstances applicable to the subject property such as size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone and vicinity.*
- *That such variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right or use generally possessed by other property in the same zone and vicinity, but which, because of such special circumstances and practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships is denied to the property in question.*
- *That the granting of such variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the same zone or vicinity in which the property is located.*

- *That the granting of the variance will not adversely affect any element of the general plan.*

Staff finds that proposed sign is utilizing a narrow corner of a triangular lot in a previously developed site for a church would have been difficult to develop with any other structures. Although the proposed sign is located within the same property as the church, the installation maintenance and usage of the proposed sign will not disrupt the scheduled functions of the church, as there is enough distance from the proposed structure to the existing structure. In addition, the property owner who is affiliated with the church has agreed lease the portion of the property to the applicant. Moreover, the proposed sign is oriented to the freeway and will have limited visibility from the commercial area at the intersection of Dillon and Vista Del Norte. There are no other sensitive uses described in the Coachella Municipal Code, such as parks, public schools, courthouse, city hall or public museum, within 600 foot distance requirement for outdoor advertising signs. Furthermore, the nearest existing freeway-oriented advertising sign approximately 1,300 feet away that is not digital or electronic sign. The maintenance for the digital billboard sign will not be as extensive in comparison to the conventional banner type of billboard sign, as advertising images maybe be revised with a computer device offsite and there will be no need for physical installation or removal of signs due to sign deterioration or vacancy. Therefore, staff is recommending approval of Variance No. 22-01 with the findings and conditions attached in this report.

Use Interpretation:

The applicant, Foxpoint Interactive LLC, is also requesting for a use determination that the proposed electronic/digital billboard sign is similar to the electronic message board signs (reader boards) as identified in the Municipal Code 17.56.010 Section E(1). “...*electronic message board signs (reader boards) may be permitted in the CG zone, on properties with a minimum street frontage of 200 feet, as long as all messages are of sufficient size and duration so as to be easily readable by the general public traveling by the site. Electronic message board signs shall not include flashing, blinking, or scrolling images or messages. Electronic message board signs shall not be placed within 1,000 feet of any other existing electronic message board sign.*” There are currently no electronic billboard signs in the City of Coachella and electronic message boards signs are not specifically described as permitted in Chapter 5.48 and therefore a use interpretation is required.

The proposed electronic/digital billboard sign is affixed to the freeway-oriented outdoor sign structure is within the CG zone with approximately frontage of 600 feet. Since, the proposed sign is freeway oriented outdoor advertising sign, it is located away from the existing structure towards the corner oriented towards I-10 freeway. The images on the electronic/digital billboard sign will be in a presentation mode, where each image will be projected for a six to eight second duration, to allow the public traveling through the freeway to view the images accordingly. The proposed electronic/digital billboard sign will not be flashing, blinking or scrolling images or messages as conditioned for this project. The images will only transition as it moves from one image to another and will be still images with no animation or any movement. The proposed electronic/digital billboard sign is approximately 1,300 feet east from an existing outdoor advertising sign. The closest outdoor advertising sign electronic message board approximately 2,000 feet west projecting gas prices in Love’s Truck Stop located 45-761 Dillon Rd, Coachella, CA 92236. Staff

concludes that the proposed sign, electronic/digital billboard sign is similar in nature to a message board sign.

Environmental Setting:

The subject site is within an existing developed site at 85901 Vista Del Norte generally surrounded by urban uses, with adjoining zoning and land uses as follows:

North: Agriculture, C-T Tourist Commercial

South: I-10 Freeway

East: Vacant, C-G, General Commercial

West: Gas Station, C-G, General Commercial

Site Plan / Parking and Circulation:

The site is developed where it is currently being utilized as a church. There is one access point to the site from Vista Del Norte. The site provides ample parking spaces for the existing church. No modifications to the existing structures are proposed with this request.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN:

The proposed freeway-oriented outdoor advertising sign would allow for digital advertising that may be utilized by local business for services and product advertisement. The location of the proposed sign is within the General Plan Subarea 12, which includes a policy to “*capitalize access to the freeway and seek out and encourage freeway, oriented uses, large format retail, lodging and regional entertainment and recreational uses that benefit for easy regional access.*” The proposed sign is an appropriate advertising structure orientated along the freeway to support and attract potential businesses or developments to subarea 12. In addition, the sign will provide advertising for businesses along the freeway, with the benefit to the city as the closest entrance to the city through Dillon Road.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff has determined that the proposed project is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act as “New Construction of Small Structures” (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15303). The proposed project consists of construction of a new sign structure involving no expansion of existing or former commercial use on the property. In addition, the determination of consistency of an electronic/digital billboard sign similar to a permitted electronic message board would not have a significant environmental impact on the environment and is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of State CEQA Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Based on the analysis contained herein and the findings listed below, staff is recommending that the Planning Commission adopt Resolution No. PC 2022-08, approving Variance No. 22-01 with the findings and conditions and approving the Interpretation of Chapter 17.56 Signs that electronic/digital billboard sign is similar to an electronic message board. Planning Commission also requests staff prepare Coachella Municipal Code amendments that allow for electronic/digital outdoor advertising signs.
2. Deny the proposed project.
3. Continue this item and provide staff and the applicant with direction.

Attachments:

1. Resolution No. PC 2022-08
Exhibit A – Conditions of Approval
Exhibit B – Interpretation
2. Project Plans
3. Vicinity Map
4. Existing Site Conditions