



# City of Culver City

Mike Balkman Council  
Chambers  
9770 Culver Blvd.  
Culver City, CA 90232

## Staff Report

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**File #:** 22-683, **Version:** 1

**Item #:** A-4.

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**CC - (1) Discussion of a Recommendation by the Economic Development Subcommittee to Consider the Installation of Two Freestanding Monument Directional Signs in the Expanded Portion of Town Plaza; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.**

**Meeting Date:** February 14, 2022

**Contact Person/Dept:** Todd Tipton - CDD/Economic Development  
**Phone Number:** (310) 253-5783

**Fiscal Impact:** Yes ☐ No ☐

**General Fund:** Yes ☒ No ☐

**Public Hearing:** ☐ **Action Item:** ☒ **Attachments:** ☐

**Commission Action Required:** Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:**

**Public Notification:** (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (02/09/2022); Culver City Downtown Business Association (02/09/2022); Hackman Capital Partners (02/09/2022); Business and property owners adjacent to Town Plaza (02/09/2022);

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (02/04/2022)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the City Council (1) discuss a recommendation from the Economic Development Subcommittee (Vice Mayor Vera and Council Member Eriksson) (Subcommittee) to consider the installation of City signage, consisting of two freestanding monument directional signs, in the expanded portion of Town Plaza; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

### **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this hearing is to get City Council direction on proceeding with a proposal to install business directional signage in the Town Plaza Expansion (Expanded Plaza). In 2018, Hackman Capital Partners (HCP) developed the Culver Steps (the Steps) in Downtown Culver City and the City (in partnership with HCP) spent approximately \$3.2 million dollars to redevelop the public property adjacent to the Steps in order to create a new public open space that could also serve as a public venue for art, music and special events.

The design and orientation of the Steps was intended to establish a good building relationship to the

street and plaza but some of the ground floor tenants are not visible from either Culver or Washington Boulevards because they are located at the back of the building. Certain other business located south of the Expanded Plaza also have reduced visibility because they have no street frontage. To improve the public's awareness of these businesses, HCP has requested the City consider installing City signage, consisting of two freestanding monument directional signs, in the Expanded Plaza (Attachment 1).

Upon receipt of HCP's request, there were a few iterations on the sign design and staff suggested that they investigate placing additional signs on the Steps building face to minimize impacts to the Expanded Plaza. HCP researched the matter and believes signs on the building will adversely affect the building appearance and will not provide the desired visibility for their businesses from Culver and Washington Boulevards. HCP has proposed recent modifications shown on Attachment 1. Staff also expressed concerns to HCP regarding the sign design as they are large, auto oriented and do not fit the pedestrian orientation of the Expanded Plaza. There had also been discussion of creating a downtown directory for placement in the Expanded Plaza which could include more downtown businesses along with the businesses under consideration with the HCP proposal.

On September 14, 2021, the Subcommittee considered HCP's request and directed staff to work with HCP to refine the sign design and bring the matter to the City Council for consideration. Following the Subcommittee meeting, HCP revised a proposed design to improve the appearance of the signs to improve the pedestrian orientation. Staff believes the appearance of the signs could be further improved if the sign face had more relief with the tenant names cut out from the proposed composite panels and backlit instead of using flat-cut/painted aluminum letters mounted to a panel that is externally illuminated. In general staff tries to discourage such signage in sign permit applications on private property.

## DISCUSSION

Additional work is needed if the City Council wishes to move forward with this concept, including further evaluation of how the signs design/construction and ongoing maintenance/replacement costs can be funded, what criteria would be applied for a business to be eligible to utilize the signs (i.e. businesses with obscured visibility from Culver or Washington Boulevards), which legislative body should review the design, criteria and program administration for the signage, and whether Downtown signage should be reviewed overall to consider other types of signs, such as menu/A-frame signs.

Staff's preliminary findings related to the additional work needed to implement this sign program indicate:

- *Funding design/construction costs:* Each sign will cost approximately \$40,000, which includes design and construction (\$80,000 total). If the City Council determines to move forward with such a sign program, staff will work with the City Attorney's Office to review the most appropriate mechanism to ensure the City's costs are fully covered and will provide a recommendation to City Council when the details of the program return to City Council for consideration.
- *Funding ongoing maintenance/replacement costs:* Ongoing maintenance/replacement costs

are unknown at this time. If the City Council determines to move forward with such a sign program, staff will work with the City Attorney's Office to review the most appropriate mechanism to ensure the City's costs are fully covered and will provide a recommendation to City Council when the details of the program return to City Council for consideration.

- *Eligibility Criteria:* Businesses with obscured visibility from either Culver or Washington Boulevards (estimated to be eight businesses/three property owners) would be eligible to utilize the signs. The eight businesses are:
  - Culver Steps (Mendocino Farms, adjacent vacant tenant space, Phil's Coffee)
  - Renato Romano's property (Make Out Café, corner tenant space and tenant space on A Street that are vacant)
  - former Arclight Theater
  - Carasau Ristorante

If the City Council determines to move forward with such a sign program, staff will work with the City Attorney's Office to further review eligibility criteria to ensure they are objective, and not arbitrary or capricious, and will provide a recommendation to City Council when the details of the program return to City Council for consideration.

- *Review of Downtown Signage:* Due to the unique circumstances involved and the potential of expanding the sign program to include A-frame signs throughout downtown, staff believes the City Council should be the legislative body to consider the proposed sign program, should the City Council determine to move forward.

### Next Steps

If the City Council supports the addition of City signage in the Expanded Town Plaza, in concept, staff and the City Attorney's Office will complete their work related to the items identified above and return with a proposed sign program for City Council's consideration.

### FISCAL ANALYSIS

There is no fiscal impact associated with the discussion of this item. If City Council provides direction to move forward with a proposed sign program, staff will identify the fiscal impacts association with such program when this matter returns.

### ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Sign Plans

### MOTION

That the City Council:

1. Discuss a recommendation from the Economic Development Subcommittee to consider the design and installation of City signage, consisting of two freestanding monument directional signs, in the expanded portion of Town Plaza; and
2. Provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.