

TO: Design Review Board 

FROM: Planning and Building Services Department
Hector Rojas, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: **CITY OF RICHMOND - REPLACEMENT OF THE HILLTOP DISTRICT PYLON SIGN, PLN08-055:** Sign Design Review Permit and Variance to replace the existing Hilltop District Pylon Sign

OWNER/APPLICANT: City of Richmond

CONSULTANT: Jason Frith – Arrow Sign Company

LOCATION: Near the Hilltop Drive exit on Interstate Highway 80

APN: 405-290-068

AREA: 625 square feet of an 11.324 acre site at 3189 Garrity Way

GENERAL PLAN: 930, Regional Office/Shopping

ZONING: C-3, Regional Commercial

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend conditional approval of the Sign Design Review Permit and Variance to the City Council, subject to conditions of approval

CEQA REVIEW: Categorically Exempt, CEQA Guidelines §15311(a): On-premise signs.

BACKGROUND:

The 625-square-foot subject site contains the Hilltop District pylon sign which is visible from Interstate Highway 80 near the Hilltop Drive exit and has fallen into considerable disrepair. The pylon sign has a height of approximately 50 feet and identifies the general amenities that are available in the Hilltop area such as restaurants, lodging, and business parks, but does not advertise any specific businesses. The pylon sign is accessed from Garrity Way through a 12-foot-wide access easement that extends over the Tides Apartments property at 3189 Garrity Way (refer to Attachments 1 through 2 for a site aerial photo and photos of the existing signage).

In late 2007, the Hilltop Advisory Committee expressed a strong interest in replacing the current pylon sign with one that would list the names of major Hilltop business tenants, and include a revenue generating LED display screen. Upon consultation with various City Departments, the Hilltop Advisory Committee retained Oakland-based Arrow Sign Company to design the replacement pylon sign. The proposed design is attached as Exhibit A and was developed as a result of input at numerous meetings between representatives of the Hilltop Advisory Committee and various City departments.

PROPOSAL:

The proposed pylon sign, as shown in Exhibit A, features an attractive modern design with an 18 foot by 31 foot full-color changeable LED message center, as well as eight 3.5 foot by 15.5 foot static sign panels on both sign faces. The pylon sign will have a footprint of 3.75 feet by 37 feet and a maximum height of 112 feet. The static sign panels will be reserved for major Hilltop business tenants including, but not limited to, Macy's, JCPenney, and Sears. The message center will be used to display local and national ads as well as to promote citywide events and attractions. Message center content will be managed by the City through a third-party firm and will conform to the Outdoor Advertising Act (Section 5200 et seq., State Business and Professions Code). Advertising revenue to the City from the message center use is estimated at approximately \$400,000 per year.

ANALYSIS:

Conformance with the General Plan:

Signage is not a topic specifically addressed by the General Plan. However, the proposed pylon sign will be consistent with the General Plan as it will assist the City in accomplishing the following General Plan goals:

1. *Economic Development Goal ED-C: Improve the general business climate in the City by citywide beautification, providing easy access to and through the city, enhancing blighted and underdeveloped areas, structures and lands, and by pursuing other activities which will stimulate new business investment in the City.*

Statement of Conformance: The existing pylon sign has fallen into visible disrepair and is a major eyesore to people who pass through Richmond on Interstate Highway 80. The proposed pylon sign features an attractive sleek, steel modern design with a state-of-the-art LED message center, and will replace the existing sign at a key city gateway in need of beautification. The new pylon sign will improve business awareness and interest as it will specify the names of major Hilltop tenants as opposed to the general amenities available in the area advertised by the existing sign copy.

2. *Economic Development Goal ED-D: Diversify the City's economic base.*

Statement of Conformance: The proposed pylon sign will be owned by the City of Richmond and will provide a valuable source of revenue from local and national advertisements as it is located near Interstate Highway 80 – a major north-south regional connector. This source of revenue will help diversify the City's economic base which is primarily derived from retail and commercial sales and property taxes.

Conformance with the Sign Ordinance:

The subject site is zoned C-3, Regional Commercial. Gateway directional signs such as the proposed pylon sign are allowed in the C-3 zoning district subject to Design Review Board approval of a sign design review permit. Section 15.06.070(D) of the Sign Ordinance requires the Design Review Board to apply the following guidelines when considering the issuance of a sign permit for a gateway directional sign:

1. *The size and height of such sign shall help establish and maintain an appropriate character for its locale.*

Statement of Conformance: The size and height of the proposed pylon sign is commensurate with the Hilltop District's role as a regional commercial center. The proposed size and height is further warranted as the new pylon sign will list several businesses, thereby reducing the necessity for several large, individual on-site signs. The new pylon sign will support the viability of large-scale commercial businesses in the Hilltop area that contribute to the City's economy.

2. *Such sign shall be no larger than necessary to be readable from the appropriate point of vision and shall be simple and uncluttered in design.*

Statement of Conformance: The existing pylon sign is approximately 75 feet high and can be easily discerned by southbound I-80 traffic. In contrast, the existing pylon sign's visibility to northbound traffic is extremely poor due to a collection of tall trees that are planted around the I-80 off-ramp at Hilltop Drive. The proposed pylon sign has been designed with a height of 112 feet to improve northbound visibility. Additionally, the proposed pylon sign features a simple, yet sophisticated, modern design composed primarily of rectangular and cylindrical elements painted with a metallic blue, white, and grey color scheme.

3. *Information on each component sign shall be clearly stated and include only the business name, principal service offered, hours of operation and business location.*

Statement of Conformance: The new pylon sign will be composed of two key areas – the static sign panels and LED message center. The static sign panels will only display the names of major tenants in the Hilltop area. The message center will be used to promote citywide events as well as businesses not otherwise identified on the existing static sign panels.

4. *Advertising of any ancillary products shall be prohibited.*

Statement of Conformance: See Statement of Conformance under Guideline 3, above.

SIGN VARIANCE FINDINGS:

The subject site is located approximately 200 feet from Interstate Highway 80. The maximum allowable height for gateway directional signs within a 660-foot proximity of any freeway is 12 feet. The proposed pylon sign requires a variance as the proposed height is 112 feet from the finished grade. Pursuant to Section 15.06.100 of the Sign Ordinance, the Design Review Board has the authority to grant a variance from the provisions of the Sign Ordinance. In order to grant a sign variance, the Design Review Board must adopt the following three findings. Each finding is followed by a statement of fact in support of the required finding.

1. *There are special conditions or exceptional characteristics in the nature of the property affected by the application of such provisions, including size, shape, topography, location or surroundings such that literal enforcement of such provisions in the particular case would deprive the applicant of substantial property rights commonly enjoyed on other properties in the same zoning district.*

Statement of Fact: The maximum height for a gateway directional sign at the subject site is 12 feet. Literal enforcement of the maximum height in this case would result in extremely poor visibility of the proposed pylon sign to traffic moving northbound on Interstate Highway 80 due to a grove of tall trees planted around the Interstate Highway 80 off-ramp at Hilltop Drive. The proposed pylon sign has been designed with a height of 112 feet to improve visibility for the travelling public on northbound Interstate Highway 80. The variance would allow the pylon sign the amount of visibility enjoyed by other properties with pylon signs including the Macdonald 80 Shopping Center, which have also received variances to the height standard for gateway directional signs established by Section 15.06.080 of the Sign Ordinance.

2. *The variance would not grant any special privilege to the applicant which is denied by such provisions to other properties in the same zoning district.*

Statement of Fact: The variance would allow the pylon sign a similar amount of visibility enjoyed by other properties with pylon signs, including the Macdonald 80 Shopping Center.

3. *The variance will not be contrary to the purposes of this chapter or to the purposes and objectives of the City's General Plan.*

Statement of Fact: The variance will be consistent with the purposes of the Sign Ordinance as it will strengthen the viability of major Hilltop businesses that contribute to the City's economy, reduce the need for several, individual signs that would result in wasteful and unsightly competition in signage, and improve the visual image of services and businesses located in Hilltop Mall area of the City at the prominent Hilltop District gateway. The granting of the variance is consistent with the General Plan as the proposed pylon sign will assist the City in achieving Economic Development Goals ED-C and ED-D by attracting customers to local businesses, and also through the generation of revenue from the LED message center service.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Design Review Board forward a recommendation to the City Council to adopt Sign Variance Findings 1 through 3 with the accompanying statements of fact, and approve the Sign Variance and Sign Design Review Permit for the replacement Hilltop District pylon sign, subject to the following project specific and standard conditions of approval:

Project Specific Conditions of Approval:

1. Substantial Conformance: The pylon sign shall be completed in substantial conformance with the Project Plans in Exhibit A, prepared by Arrow Sign Company, submitted to and date-stamped received by the Richmond Planning and Building Services Department on October 14, 2008, except as modified by these conditions of approval.
2. Maximum Sign Height: The pylon sign's maximum height shall be 112 feet, including any minor elements such as antennae, as measured from the finished grade.
3. Guidelines for Message Center Content: Prior to operation of the pylon sign, the City shall develop guidelines for the general display of message center content. The guidelines shall

be subject to review and approval by the Design Review Board prior to operation of the LED message center.

4. Conformance with the Outdoor Advertising Act: The pylon sign and pylon sign content shall conform to the applicable regulations in Article 7 of the Outdoor Advertising Act (Section 5200 et seq., State Business and Professions Code).
5. Landscaping at Sign Base: Prior to operation of the pylon sign, the City shall develop a landscape plan for installation around the base of the pylon sign. The landscape plan shall be subject to review and approval by the Design Review Board prior to issuance of building permits for the sign.
6. Third Party Excavations: The Common Ground Alliance shall be contacted at their 811 phone line to verify the location of any underground utility lines prior to any project related earthwork.

Standard Conditions of Approval:

7. Stormwater Management during Construction: During construction activities, the company responsible for the excavation and installation of the sign structure shall reduce or prevent to the maximum extent practicable the direct or indirect discharge of any dust or pollutant into the storm drain system utilizing best management practices contained in the California Storm Water Best Management Practices Handbook for Construction Activities. Construction activities include, but are not limited to: watering operations; roadwork and paving operations; concrete and painting; structure construction and painting; construction material storage and handling; construction waste/debris storage and disposal; and, construction equipment/vehicle cleaning, maintenance and fueling operations. The company responsible for the excavation and installation of the sign structure is also responsible for training all contractors and subcontractors on the best management practices identified in the California Storm Water Best Management Practices Handbook for Construction Activities which shall be made available by the company at the pre-construction meeting of the project.
8. Storm Drain Protection: All storm drains which serve the site shall be protected from spills and soil runoff (from unpaved parking areas). The applicant may use "Any Source Control" BMP (Best Management Practice) as listed in the California Storm Water Best Management Practice Handbook for storm water run-off for commercial and industrial sites. Storm drains will be inspected periodically.
9. Conditions of Approval on Plans: All conditions of approval shall be written on the first or second page of the construction plans submitted for review and approval. These conditions of approval shall be on, at all times, all grading and construction plans kept on the project site.
10. Responsibility to Inform: The company responsible for the excavation and installation of the sign structure shall be responsible for informing all subcontractors, consultants engineers, or other business entities providing services related to the project of their responsibilities to comply with all pertinent requirements herein, in the City of Richmond Municipal Code,

including the requirement that a business license be obtained by all entities doing business in the City as well as hours of operation requirements in the City.

11. Changes to Design: Prior written approval from the Planning and Building Services Director or his/her designee shall be received before any minor changes are made to the site design, grade, building design, building colors or materials, or related design elements. Major changes shall be subject to review by the Design Review Board at the Planning and Building Services Director's discretion.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Public notification consisted of a legal notice in the local newspaper and notification by mail of property owners within a 300-foot radius of the project site.

APPEAL PERIOD:

The Design Review Board's decision may be appealed to the City Council by notifying the City Clerk in writing stating wherein the Design Review Board's decision is in error and paying the appeal fee by December 22, 2008.

EXHIBITS:

Exhibit A: Project Plans

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Site Aerial Photo
2. Photos of Existing Pylon Sign

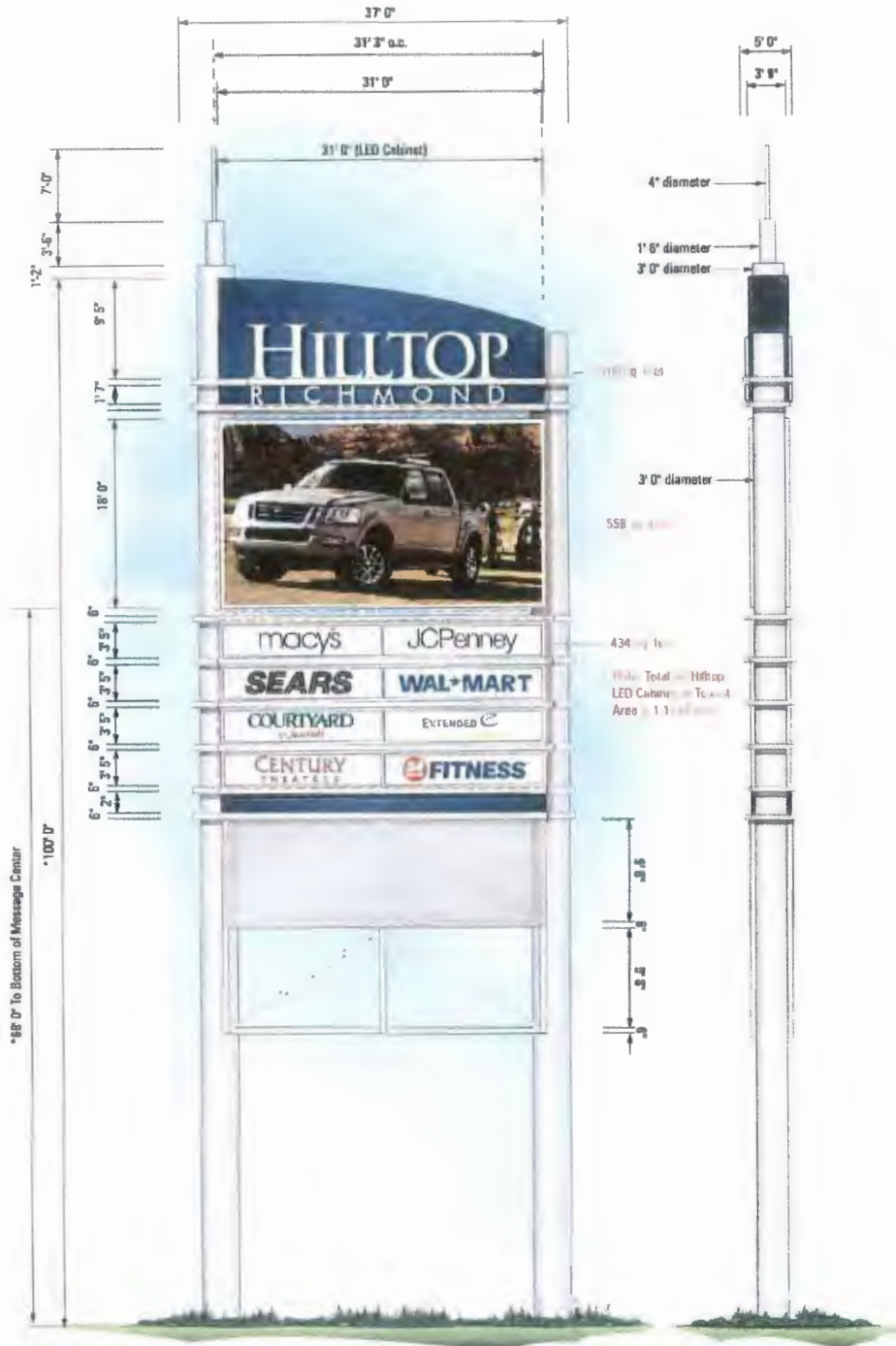
cc:

1. Bill Lindsay – Richmond City Manager
2. ~~Scott Dickey – Richmond City Attorney~~
3. Jim Goins – Richmond Finance Department
4. ~~Steve Duran – Richmond Community and Economic Development~~
5. ~~Thomas Mills – Richmond Community Economic Development~~
6. ~~Tony Norris~~ – Hilltop Landscape Maintenance District
7. ~~Becky Ross~~ – Hilltop Advisory Committee
Ami
Courtyard by Marriot
3150 Garrity Way
Richmond, CA 94806
8. ~~Michelle Itagaki~~ – Richmond Convention & Visitor's Bureau
Beth
3925 Macdonald Ave.
Richmond, CA 94805
9. ~~Matthew G. Smith~~ – Tides Apartments
Dan
3185 Garrity Way
Richmond, CA 94806
10. ~~Shirley Petty~~ – Hilltop Green Homeowner's Association
1095 Parkside

File No.: PLN08-055
DRB Meeting: 12/10/08
Agenda Item No.: 7
Page: 7 of 7

Richmond, CA 94803
11. Jerry Richardson – Fairmede Hilltop Neighborhood Council
P.O. Box 20442
El Sobrante, CA 94820

Exhibit A



A SIGN ELEVATION - Option 1 SCALE: 3/8" = 1'-0"

*Note: The overall height of the pylon sign may increase as much as 20'-0" based on the findings of on site flagging survey.



Arrow Sign Company
 1051 46th Avenue
 Oakland, Ca, 94601-4436
 Phone 510.533.7693
 Fax. 510.533.0815
 www.arrowsigncompany.com

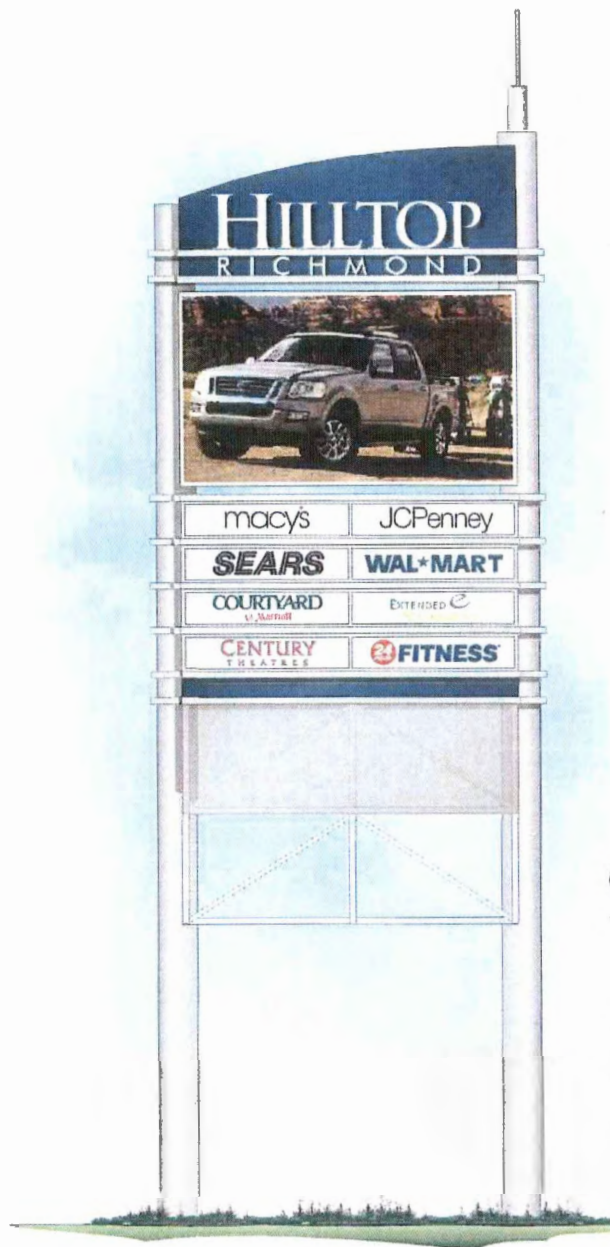
Rev.	Date	Description
A	9-11-08	Final Input
B	8-24-08	Revised sign to 30' x added 2 more brand logos
C	10-14-08	Established logos for format, LED display & Billboard size

Sheet 3

80323

Customer Approval

This drawing is a representation of colors and may not accurately depict final color of product. Always refer to actual print files or material of sample for color reference.



A SIGN ELEVATION - REVERSE SIDE - Option 1 SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

SPECIFICATION

Double face internally illuminated pylon sign.

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	VENDOR	SPECIFICATION
Pole Support	3" diameter	Kelly Moore	KM 661-L "Silver King"
Pole Support detail	1' 0" diameter & 4" diameter	Kelly Moore	KM 661-L "Silver King"
Hilltop Richmond cabinet & Lower cabinet	Metal	Matthews	Blue PMS 283 C
Hilltop & Richmond face	Acrylic	Chencast	
Hilltop & Richmond re bars	5" deep aluminum	Matthews	
Hilltop & Richmond tri supports	1"	Javelite	
Hilltop & Richmond illum.	LED		
Tenant & Message Center cabinet	Metal	Matthews	Gray PMS 427 C
Tenant faces	Polycarbonate	GE	White lexan
Tenant background	1st surface vinyl	3M	Pearl Gray #7725-11 w/ white blackout
Tenant copy	1st surface vinyl	3M	Per tenant copy
Dividers	6" square tube	Matthews	Gray PMS 427 C
Lower Frame	6" angles	Matthews	Gray PMS 427 C
Lower Background	Perforated aluminum		Per Detail
Message Center	Full Color	Arrow vision	25mm



Arrow Sign Company
 1051 46th Avenue
 Oakland, Ca, 94601-4436
 Phone 510.533.7693
 Fax. 510.533.0815
 www.arrowsigncompany.com

Hilltop District
 Richmond, Ca
 Date: 3-19-08
 Sales: Jason Frith
 Design: Charlie Stroud
 2008/H/Hilltop District

Rev.	Date	Description
A	3-21-08	Revised layout
B	10-09-08	Added night view & Hilltop Richmond logo
C	10-14-08	Colorized by: Matthew Frithwood LED by: Javelite & Hilltop dist.

Sheet 4

80323

Customer Approval

This drawing is a representation of colors and does not necessarily depict final color of product. Always refer to actual print shops or material samples for color reference.



A SIGN ELEVATION - REVERSE SIDE - Night - Option 1

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"



Arrow Sign Company
1051 46th Avenue
Oakland, Ca, 94601-4436
Phone 510.533.7693
Fax. 510.533.0815
www.arrowsigncompany.com

Hilltop District

Richmond, Ca
Date: 3-19-08
Sales: Jason Frith
Design: Charlie Stroud
2008/H/Hilltop District

80323

Rev.	Date	Description

Customer Approval

This drawing is a preliminary sketch of design and does not constitute an offer. All dimensions are subject to the actual physical conditions of the site. All dimensions are subject to the actual project requirements and may be subject to change without notice.

Attachment 1 – Location/Aerial Map

Source: Microsoft Live Maps

