



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

August 16, 2011

Supervisor Farrell and
Ms. Angela Calvillo, Clerk
Board of Supervisors
City and County of San Francisco
City Hall, Room 244
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

**Re: Transmittal of Planning Case Number 2011.0656TZ
BF No. 11-0448: Amending Planning Code Sections 602.10, 607.1, 608,
adding Section 608.16, and Amending Sectional Map SSD of the Zoning
Map to Establish the City Center Special Sign District.**

Recommendation: Approval with Modifications

Dear Supervisor Farrell and Ms. Calvillo,

On August 11, 2011, the San Francisco Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") conducted a duly noticed public hearing at a regularly scheduled meeting to consider the proposed Ordinance under Board of Supervisors File Number 11-0448.

At the August 11th hearing, the Commission voted 6-0 to recommend approval with modifications of the proposed Ordinance which would create the City Center Special Sign District in order to facilitate appropriate new signage for the existing shopping center site including the proposed new formula retail use and other commercial tenants. At that hearing, the Commission requested that the proposal be amended to reduce the maximum height of the proposed new freestanding sign on Masonic Avenue from 35 feet to 20 feet in height. In addition, the Commission recommended that the four new blade signs proposed for Geary Boulevard be designed in a manner that makes them clearly distinct from and subordinate to the existing blade sign.

Supervisor, please advise the City Attorney at your earliest convenience if you wish to incorporate the changes recommended by the Commission. The attached resolution provides more detail about the Commission's action. If you have any questions or require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AM-Rodgers", written over a horizontal line.

AnMarie Rodgers
Manager of Legislative Affairs

Cc: City Attorney Elaine Warren

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Suite 400
San Francisco,
CA 94103-2479

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Information:
415.558.6377

Attachments (one copy of the following):

Planning Commission Resolution No. 18428
Department Executive Summary



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Planning Commission Resolution No. 18428

HEARING DATE: AUGUST 11, 2011

Project Name: City Center Special Sign District
Case Number: 2011.0656TZ [Board File No. 11-0448]
Initiated by: Supervisor Farrell / Introduced June 7, 2011
Staff Contact: Sophie Hayward, Legislative Affairs
sophie.hayward@sfgov.org, 415-558-6372
Reviewed by: AnMarie Rodgers, Manager Legislative Affairs
anmarie.rodgers@sfgov.org, 415-558-6395
Recommendation: **Recommend Approval with Modifications**

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RECOMMENDING THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ADOPT WITH MODIFICATIONS A PROPOSED ORDINANCE AMENDING PLANNING CODE SECTIONS 602.10 (DEFINITIONS), 607.1 (SIGNS IN NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS), 608 (SPECIAL SIGN DISTRICTS), ADDING SECTION 608.16 (THE CITY CENTER SPECIAL SIGN DISTRICT), AND AMENDING SECTIONAL MAP SSD OF THE ZONING MAP TO ESTABLISH THE CITY CENTER SPECIAL SIGN DISTRICT ENCOMPASSING THE REAL PROPERTY ON ASSESSOR'S BLOCK 1094, LOT 001, BOUNDED BY MASONIC AVENUE, GEARY BOULEVARD, LYON STREET, AND O'FARRELL STREET TO ALLOW ADDITIONAL PROJECTING SIGNS, FREESTANDING IDENTIFYING AND DIRECTIONAL SIGNS, AND TO MODIFY EXISTING CONTROLS ON BUSINESS WALL SIGNS.

PREAMBLE

Whereas, on June 7, 2011, Supervisor Farrell introduced a proposed Ordinance under Board of Supervisors (hereinafter "Board") File Number 11-0448 that would amend Planning Code Sections 602.10 (Definitions), 607.1 (Neighborhood Commercial Districts), 608 (Special Sign Districts), and add Section 608.16 ("City Center Special Sign District"), and amend Sectional Map SSD of the Zoning Map to establish the "City Center Special Sign District" encompassing the real property bounded by Masonic Avenue, Geary Boulevard, Lyon Street, and O'Farrell Street (Assessor's Block 1094, Lot 001), to allow additional projecting signs, freestanding identifying and directional signs, and to modify existing controls on business wall signs. The proposed Ordinance for a Sectional Map Amendment and Planning Code Text Changes has been introduced in order to facilitate appropriate new signage for the existing shopping center site including the proposed new formula retail use and other commercial tenants; and

Whereas, on August 11, 2011, the San Francisco Planning Commission (hereinafter "Commission") conducted a duly noticed public hearing at a regularly scheduled meeting to consider the proposed Ordinance; and

Whereas, on August 10, 2011, the proposed zoning changes were determined to be exempt from environmental review under Section 15061(b)(3)) of the CEQA Guidelines; and;

Whereas, the Commission has heard and considered the testimony presented to it at the public hearing and has further considered written materials and oral testimony presented on behalf of the applicant, Department staff, and other interested parties; and

Whereas, the all pertinent documents may be found in the files of the Department, as the custodian of records, at 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco; and

Whereas, the Commission has reviewed the proposed Ordinance; and

MOVED, that the Commission hereby recommends that the Board of Supervisors recommends *approval of the proposed Ordinance with modifications* and adopts the attached Draft Resolution to that effect. Specifically, the Commission recommends the following modifications:

The Commission recommends two substantive modifications regarding the proposed freestanding signs that would be permitted within the SSD:

- That the large freestanding sign on Masonic Avenue near O'Farrell (described in **Section 608.16(f)(4)(A)**) be reduced in height from the proposed maximum of 35 feet in height to a **maximum of 20 feet in height**, and that the sign's maximum width not exceed its current width.
- That the four new projecting blade signs proposed for the Geary Street elevation (described in **Section 608.16(f)(3)(c)**) be visually distinct from and subordinate to the existing blade sign on the structure.

In addition, the Commission recommends a minor modification to the text of **Section 608.16(f)(1)(C)(i)**. The subsection includes a reference to Masonic Street, which should be referred to as Masonic Avenue.

FINDINGS

Having reviewed the materials identified in the preamble above, and having heard all testimony and arguments, this Commission finds, concludes, and determines as follows:

1. The existing shopping center is an unusual suburban-style structure within an urban setting that includes both commercial sites and residential areas in the immediate vicinity;
2. That commercial uses on the subject and facing blocks include office supply stores, electronics stores, restaurants, bars, dental offices, hair salons, and other professional offices, but that the majority of buildings in the surrounding area are residential structures, and that buildings facing the subject block range from two- to four-stories tall with several taller buildings interspersed;
3. Current sign regulations for the NC-3 District do not provide sufficient visibility for businesses located within the City Center, given its particular configuration of site development, and that the

existing signage is insufficient to adequately direct customers to existing businesses from the various parking lots and pedestrian entrances;

4. That a new Special Sign District would improve the existing signage and would facilitate a unified tenant sign program for the subject site as well as respond to the particular configuration and topography of the subject lot;
5. That with the Commission's recommended amendments to the proposed Ordinance, the Special Sign District would facilitate a sign program that would better respond to the surrounding context of low-scale residential buildings while still improving the signage on-site to facilitate access to both the large and small commercial tenants;
6. **General Plan Compliance.** The proposed Ordinance is consistent with the following Objectives and Policies of the General Plan:

I. COMMERCE & INDUSTRY ELEMENT

THE COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ELEMENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN SETS FORTH OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES THAT ADDRESS THE BROAD RANGE OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, FACILITIES, AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS THAT CONSTITUTE SAN FRANCISCO'S EMPLOYMENT AND SERVICE BASE.

OBJECTIVE 2:

MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE A SOUND AND DIVERSE ECONOMIC BASE AND FISCAL STRUCTURE FOR THE CITY.

Policy 2.1:

Seek to retain existing commercial and industrial activity and to attract new such activity to the City.

The proposed Ordinance will facilitate a Special Sign District that would allow a unified tenant sign program for the subject site that would provide improved way finding, directional, and identifying signage for businesses located within the shopping center in order to improve its economic viability.

OBJECTIVE 6

MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN VIABLE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL AREAS EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO CITY RESIDENTS.

POLICY 6.3

Preserve and promote the mixed commercial-residential character in neighborhood commercial districts. Strike a balance between the preservation of existing affordable housing and needed expansion of commercial activity.

The existing shopping center is well served by MUNI and is easily accessible to City residents. The proposed new Special Sign District would improve access to the site by providing clearer way finding to

existing and new businesses located within the shopping center, while responding, through the careful arrangement of signs, to the surrounding residential and commercial uses.

II. URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

THE URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT CONCERNS THE PHYSICAL CHARACTER AND ORDER OF THE CITY, AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT.

OBJECTIVE 1

EMPHASIS OF THE CHARACTERISTIC PATTERN WHICH GIVES TO THE CITY AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS AN IMAGE, A SENSE OF PURPOSE, AND A MEANS OF ORIENTATION.

Policy 1.9

Increase the clarity of routes for travelers.

General Plan Text under Policy 1.9: The clutter of wires, signs and disordered development should be reduced. Conflict between unnecessary private signs and street directional signs should be avoided.

While this Section of the Urban Design Element is generally discussing the importance of distinguishing a "citywide pattern" through better street design and treatments, it does discuss the importance of reducing clutter and conflict between private signage and street signage. These policies support the recommendation to lower the parking lot freestanding directional signage.

III. TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

POLICY 19.2

Promote increased traffic safety, with special attention to hazards that could cause personal injury.

General Plan Text under Policy 19.2: In some cases redesign of the roadway and of intersections to reduce conflicts between vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians is required; in others all that is necessary is to improve clarity of signs and of routing so that there is less driver uncertainty and hesitation.

The existing shopping center has six separate surface parking lots with separate entrances from Geary Boulevard, Masonic Avenue and O'Farrell Street, which are built at different grades. In addition, the shopping center has multiple entrances and levels with commercial spaces on the upper and lower stories, and access to stores from streets as well as from each of the six surface parking lots. The separate parking lots cannot be feasibly connected and require that drivers have directional information so they enter and park in the associated lot. As proposed, with the modifications recommended, the City Center Special Sign District would permit signs that assist drivers in locating the proper entrance.

7. The proposed replacement project is consistent with the eight General Plan priority policies set forth in Section 101.1 in that:
 - A) The existing neighborhood-serving retail uses will be preserved and enhanced and future opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses will be enhanced:

The proposed Ordinance will encourage neighborhood-serving retail uses or opportunities for employment in or ownership of such businesses by improving the viability of the commercial spaces within the shopping center by facilitating an appropriate sign program for the site.

- B) The existing housing and neighborhood character will be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhoods:

The proposed Ordinance would create a Special Sign District in order to facilitate appropriate new signage for the existing shopping center site including the proposed new formula retail use and other commercial tenants. With the recommended modifications, the Special Sign District would permit signs that respond to the character of the surrounding neighborhood in order to conserve and protect the character of the district, including its cultural and economic diversity.

- C) The City's supply of affordable housing will be preserved and enhanced:

The proposed Ordinance will have no adverse effect on the City's supply of affordable housing.

- D) The commuter traffic will not impede MUNI transit service or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking:

The proposed Ordinance will not result in commuter traffic impeding MUNI transit service or overburdening the streets or neighborhood parking.

- E) A diverse economic base will be maintained by protecting our industrial and service sectors from displacement due to commercial office development. And future opportunities for resident employment and ownership in these sectors will be enhanced:

The proposed Ordinance would not adversely affect the industrial or service sectors or future opportunities for resident employment or ownership in these sectors.

- F) The City will achieve the greatest possible preparedness to protect against injury and loss of life in an earthquake.

Preparedness against injury and loss of life in an earthquake is unaffected by the proposed amendments. Any new construction or alteration associated with the Special Sign District would be executed in compliance with all applicable construction and safety measures.

- G) That landmark and historic buildings will be preserved:

Landmarks and historic buildings would be unaffected by the proposed amendments.

- H) Parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas will be protected from development:

The City's parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas would be unaffected by the proposed amendments. It is not anticipated that permits would be such that sunlight access to public or private property would be adversely impacted.

I hereby certify that the Planning Commission ADOPTED the foregoing Resolution on August 11, 2011.

Linda Avery
Commission Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Antonini, Fong, Miguel, Moore, Olague, and Sugaya

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Borden

ADOPTED: August 11, 2011



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Executive Summary Planning Code Text Change and Map Amendment

HEARING DATE: JULY 28, 2011

Project Name: City Center Special Sign District
Case Number: 2011.0656TZ [Board File No. 11-0448]
Initiated by: Supervisor Farrell / Introduced June 7, 2011
Staff Contact: Sophie Hayward, Legislative Affairs
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Reviewed by: AnMarie Rodgers, Manager Legislative Affairs
anmarie.rodgers@sfgov.org, 415-558-6395
Recommendation: **Recommend Approval with Modifications**

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PLANNING CODE AMENDMENT

The proposed Ordinance would amend Planning Code Sections 602.10 (Definitions), 607.1 (Neighborhood Commercial Districts), 608 (Special Sign Districts), and add Section 608.16 ("City Center Special Sign District"), and amend Sectional Map SSD of the Zoning Map to establish the "City Center Special Sign District" encompassing the real property bounded by Masonic Avenue, Geary Boulevard, Lyon Street, and O'Farrell Street (Assessor's Block 1094, Lot 001), to allow additional projecting signs, freestanding identifying and directional signs, and to modify existing controls on business wall signs.

An associated project that requests Conditional Use Authorization (Case No. 2010.0623C) is also scheduled to be before the Planning Commission for this same hearing. The related Conditional Use authorization seeks to authorize a formula retail use in spaces formerly occupied by formula uses and a large-scale retail use. The associated project would, if approved, permit a Target retail store to occupy the first and second levels of the existing shopping center. The proposed Ordinance for a Sectional Map Amendment and Planning Code Text Changes has been introduced in order to facilitate appropriate new signage for the existing shopping center site including the proposed new formula retail use and other commercial tenants.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT USE

The proposed Ordinance would impact Assessor's Block 1094, Lot 001, which is located at the southeast corner of Geary Boulevard and Masonic Avenue within an NC-3 (Moderate-Scale Neighborhood Commercial) District and 40-X/80-D Height and Bulk Districts. The property is developed as a three-story shopping center (the City Center Shopping Plaza) that occupies the entire block, bounded by Geary Boulevard to the north, Masonic Avenue to the west, O'Farrell Street to the south, and Lyon Street to the east. The main shopping center structure fronts on the northern half of the lot facing Geary Boulevard while terraced surface parking lots cover the southern half of the lot facing O'Farrell Street. The shopping center measures approximately 202,530 square feet with three levels of retail space and 601 off-street parking spaces divided between the three retail levels and one rooftop parking lot.

The shopping center was constructed in 1951 and was used as a Sears Department Store until the early 1990s. After Sears vacated the center, the retail space was subdivided and reoccupied by several large retailers, including Mervyns, Toys R Us, the Good Guys, and Office Depot. The Good Guys vacated its space on the second level of the shopping center in 2005, and Mervyns vacated its first and second levels in December of 2008. Toys R Us has also vacated its space, which is currently occupied by Best Buy. Both retail spaces previously occupied by Mervyns and the Good Guys are still vacant.

The Way It Is Now:

The subject block is located within an NC-3 Zoning District, where current sign regulations are tailored to the small-stores of neighborhood shopping streets. There are no special sign controls unique to the subject block. The current sign regulations do not permit signage that is intended for a large-scale, multi-tenant retail center with multiple street frontages and multiple parking entries. The existing sign controls for the subject property are outlined in Planning Code Section 607.1: Neighborhood Commercial Districts, and are summarized below. Existing controls that would be substantially amended by the proposed Ordinance include:

- **Section 607.1(f)(3)(B): Wall Signs Within the NC-3.** This Section restricts wall signs within the NC-3 Districts to no more than three square feet per foot of street frontage occupied by the use, or 150 square feet for each street frontage, whichever is less. The height of any wall sign may not exceed 24 feet. There is no maximum number of wall signs permitted per lot; rather, the total area of wall signs permitted is based on the number of businesses on the lot and their respective street frontage. In effect, the existing controls allow for one wall sign with a maximum dimension of 150 square feet for the proposed Target Store on each of four elevations (the Geary Street elevation, the Masonic Avenue elevation, the Lyon Street elevation, and the O'Farrell Street elevation). The other ten businesses located within the shopping center are permitted wall signs that are varied in size, based on their amount of street frontage.
- **Section 607.1(f)(3)(C): Projecting Signs Within the NC-3.** This Section limits projecting signs to one per business. The area of the projecting sign may not exceed 32 square feet in area or 24 feet in height, nor may projecting signs project more than 6 feet, 6 inches. Given that the existing shopping center includes eleven stores (including one vacant space and the proposed Target Store), eleven projecting signs would be allowed at this site under existing controls. Please note that the permitted projecting signs are in addition to the permitted wall signs.
- **Section 607.1(f)(3)(E): Freestanding Signs and Sign Towers Within the NC-3:** This Section allows for one freestanding sign **per lot**, provided the sign is erected in-lieu of a projecting sign. The freestanding sign may not exceed 30 square feet, and its maximum height may be 24 feet. As the existing shopping center is contained within one lot, the existing controls would only allow one freestanding sign. The existing controls would permit a freestanding sign or a projecting sign – but not both.

Existing controls that would not be substantially amended by the proposed Ordinance include:

- **Section 607.1(f)(3)(D): Sign Copy on Awnings Within the NC-3.** This Section allows sign copy on awnings, however the sign copy may be provided only in-lieu of projecting signs.
- **Section 607(c): Identifying Signs.** This Section specifically limits shopping centers within NC Districts to one identifying sign that shall not exceed 30 square feet in area and 15 feet in height.

The Way It Would Be:

The proposed Ordinance would create a new Special Sign District (SSD) for the subject property by adding Planning Code Section 608.16: City Center Special Sign District. The Zoning Map SSD would be updated to include the newly create SSD.

Note to the Reviewer: The companion project for the Target Corporation, as proposed in the application for Conditional Use Authorization in Case No. 2010.0623C, includes a sign program that would be facilitated with the proposed Ordinance. Graphics for the Target sign program are attached as Exhibit C to this report. These exhibits identify the specific locations and dimensions for the proposed project's proposed new signage and help to provide a better understanding of the type of signage that this proposed Ordinance would allow.

The City Center SSD would allow three broad categories of signs on the site: Wall Signs, Projecting Signs, and Freestanding Signs and Towers. Specific quantities, locations, and dimensions of signs that would be allowed if the proposed Ordinance is approved are outlined as follows:

Wall Signs: Section 608.16(f)(1)

- **Section 608.16(f)(1)(A) Pedestrian Entrances from Parking Lot:** One wall sign would be permitted for large retail tenants (who occupy more than 8,000 square feet of space within the shopping center) above each pedestrian entrance to the business from the parking lot. These wall signs may have up to 200 square feet of area. For smaller tenants, one wall sign with up to 75 square feet of area would be permitted above each pedestrian entrance from the parking lot. No wall sign above a parking lot entry would exceed 28 feet in height. **To view a graphic representation of this proposal, please see Page 2 of the Sign Program Exhibit attached as Exhibit C.**
- **Section 608.16(f)(1)(B) Pedestrian Entrances from Public Rights-of-Way:** Wall signs above pedestrian entries from public sidewalks would be permitted, provided that each sign does not exceed 3 square feet per foot of street frontage occupied by the use, or 150 feet per street frontage, whichever is less. No wall sign above a pedestrian entry would exceed 24 feet in height. **Please note that the associated project, Case No. 2010.0623C does not currently propose signage for pedestrian entrances from public rights-of-way. The proposed Ordinance would enable signs to be added at a future date.**
- **Section 608.16(f)(1)(C)(i) Wall Signs on Masonic And Geary Street Facades:** In addition to the wall signs outlined above, three additional wall signs would be permitted along Masonic Avenue and three additional signs would be permitted along Geary Street. The maximum area for each wall sign would be 115 square feet, and the height would not exceed 48 feet above grade. **To view a graphic representation of this proposal, please see Pages 10 and 11 of the Sign Program Exhibit attached as Exhibit C.**
- **Section 608.16(f)(1)(D)(ii) Wall Signs on Building Corner at Geary and Lyon:** Wall signs would also be permitted on the building at the corner of Geary and Lyon Streets, with a maximum total

area of 500 square feet, provided that the signs do not exceed 80 feet in height on the building wall. **To view a graphic representation of this proposal, please see Page 12 of the Sign Program Exhibit attached as Exhibit C.**

- **Section 608.16(f)(1)(D)(iii) Wall Signs in Existing Sign Alcoves:** Two additional wall signs would be permitted, one in each of the existing sign alcoves below the roofline on the east and west building elevations. These wall signs may not extend beyond the height of the walls to which they are attached, shall have a maximum area of 170 square feet, and may only be identifying signs for the shopping center. **To view a graphic representation of this proposal, please see Pages 13 and 14 of the Sign Program Exhibit attached as Exhibit C.**

Projecting Signs: Section 608.16(f)(3). This new Section would allow a total of six projecting signs within the SSD, regardless of the number of businesses on the site. The new Section would allow the content of the projecting signs to include identification of the shopping center, identification of the businesses within the shopping center, and seasonal messages. Projecting signs would be allowed to extend up to 8 feet beyond the property line and up to 10 feet in height beyond the wall to which the signs are attached.

- **Section 608.16(f)(3)(C):** Five projecting signs would be permitted on Geary Street, each with two faces. The largest of the five permitted signs may have an area of up to 540 square feet with a copy area of up to 240 square feet per face, while the remaining four may have an area of up to 470 square feet and a copy area of 240 square feet per face. **To view a graphic representation of this proposal, please see Page 16 of the Sign Program Exhibit attached as Exhibit C.**
- **Section 608.16(f)(3)(D):** One projecting sign would be permitted on the shopping center building frontage that faces the parking lot at the intersection of Masonic Avenue and O'Farrell Street. The sign may have an area of up to 752 square feet, and a maximum copy area of 240 square feet per face. **To view a graphic representation of this proposal, please see Page 16 of the Sign Program Exhibit attached as Exhibit C.**

Freestanding Signs and Towers: Section 608.16(f)(4) . This new Section would allow up to eight new freestanding signs and an expansion of the existing central sign tower on the site, for a total of nine freestanding signs on the site.

- **Section 608.16(f)(4)(A):** One large freestanding sign would be permitted near the intersection of Masonic Avenue and O'Farrell Street to replace the existing freestanding sign at that location. The proposed Ordinance would allow a freestanding sign with the following characteristics: 1) up to a maximum of 35 feet in height with two faces, 2) up to a total area of 260 square feet of area per face, and 3) up to 140 square feet of copy per face. This freestanding sign would be allowed to identify both the shopping center and its tenants. **To view a graphic representation of this proposal, please see Page 27 of the Sign Program Exhibit attached as Exhibit C.**
- **Section 608.16(f)(4)(B):** Up to seven freestanding directional signs, each with two faces, would be permitted at each parking lot entry. These directional signs may be a maximum of 15 feet in height, with a maximum area of 50 square feet per face and 20 square feet of copy area. **To view a graphic representation of this, please see Page 31 of the Sign Program Exhibit attached as Exhibit C.**

- **Section 608.16(f)(4)(C):** Two identifying signs for the shopping center may be added to the existing central sign tower, provided that the area of copy be limited to 240 square feet per sign, and that their height not exceed that of the existing tower. **To view a graphic representation of this proposal, please see Page 39 of the Sign Program Exhibit attached as Exhibit C.**

Window signs and internal way finding signs would also be permitted within the SSD.

REQUIRED COMMISSION ACTION

The proposed Ordinance is before the Commission so that it may recommend adoption, rejection, or adoption with modifications to the Board of Supervisors.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends that the Commission recommend *approval with modifications* of the proposed Ordinance and adopt the attached Draft Resolution to that effect.

The Department recommends two substantive modifications regarding the proposed freestanding signs that would be permitted within the SSD:

- The Department recommends that the large freestanding sign on Masonic Avenue near O'Farrell (described in **Section 608.16(f)(4)(A)**) be reduced in height from the proposed maximum of 35 feet in height to a **maximum of 20 feet in height**. The Department recommends that the sign's maximum width not exceed its current width.
- The Department recommends that the freestanding directional signs permitted at each parking lot entry (described in **Section 608.16(f)(4)(B)**) be reduced in height from the proposed 15 feet to a **maximum height of 7 feet in height**.

In addition, the Department recommends a minor modification to the text of **Section 608.16(f)(1)(C)(i)**. The subsection includes a reference to Masonic Street, which should be referred to as Masonic Avenue.

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Department recognizes that the existing shopping center is an unusual suburban-style structure within an urban setting that includes both commercial sites and residential areas in the immediate vicinity. Commercial and institutional uses nearby include Trader Joe's on Masonic Avenue, the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, University of San Francisco, and, further afield, the Laurel Heights Shopping Center. The Divisadero Street commercial corridor is two blocks east of the Project Site. Commercial uses on the subject and facing blocks include office supply stores, electronics stores, restaurants, bars, dental offices, hair salons, and other professional offices. That said, the majority of the surrounding area is comprised of residential dwellings and residentially zoned districts. Buildings facing the subject block range from two- to four-stories tall with several taller buildings interspersed.

Current sign regulations for the NC-3 District do not provide sufficient visibility for businesses located within the City Center, given its particular configuration of site development. The City Center has six separate surface parking lots with separate entrances from Geary Boulevard, Masonic Avenue and O'Farrell Street, which are built at different grades. While there is a pedestrian entrance on Geary Boulevard, the existing configuration is largely oriented away from this major street. The separate parking lots cannot be feasibly connected and require that drivers have directional information so they

enter and park in the associated lot. In addition, the City Center has multiple entrances and levels, with commercial units on the upper and lower stories and access to stores from streets as well as from each of the six surface parking lots. Adequate signage for on-site businesses is essential to the economic stability of the City Center. As proposed, the City Center Special Sign District would permit signs that are consistent with a unified tenant sign program that would improve the viability of the existing complex. The current signage is insufficient to adequately direct customers to existing businesses from the various parking lots and pedestrian entrances.

The Department believes that the proposed sign program could be modified in order to better respond to the surrounding context of low-scale residential buildings while still improving the signage on-site to facilitate access to both the large and small commercial tenants. Lowering the maximum permitted height of the proposed freestanding sign on Masonic Avenue from 35 feet to 20 feet would serve to identify the shopping center and its tenants without overwhelming the surrounding residential area. Lowering the maximum height of the freestanding directional signs at the entrance to parking lots from 15 feet to 7 feet would better respond to the slow, low-volume residential O'Farrell Street at this location without overwhelming pedestrians.

In sum, the Department supports the proposed Ordinance to create a new Special Sign District in order to improve the signage and to facilitate a unified tenant sign program for the subject site. Modifications to the proposal as described above would better integrate the proposal with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposal to amend Planning Code Sections 602.10 (Definitions), 607.1 (Neighborhood Commercial Districts), 608 (Special Sign Districts), and add Section 608.16 ("City Center Special Sign District"), and amend Sectional Map SSD of the Zoning Map to establish the "City Center Special Sign District" is currently undergoing CEQA Review. Under Section 15061(b)(3)) of the CEQA Guidelines, a GRE is expected to be issued on Wednesday, July 27. Planning staff will bring the required CEQA document to the Commission hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENT

As of the date of this report, the Planning Department has received one emailed comment in regard to the proposed Ordinance. The comment was neither in support nor against the proposed Special Sign District; rather, it was in opposition to the Project's name, "City Center Special Sign District," and claimed that the Project name is not accurately descriptive of the Project location.

RECOMMENDATION:	Recommendation of Approval with Modifications
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Attachments:

- Exhibit A: Draft Planning Commission Resolution
- Exhibit B: Board of Supervisors File No. 11-0448
- Exhibit C: Proposed Sign Program for the associated project for the Target Corporation, as proposed in the application for Conditional Use in Case No. 2010.0623C.