



## Town of Mammoth Lakes

### Planning & Economic Development Commission Staff Report

**Meeting Date: April 10, 2024**

**AGENDA TITLE:** Consideration of Master Sign Program (MSP) 23-001 for the Outbound Mammoth signage located at 164 Old Mammoth Road in the Clearwater Specific Plan zoning district. The proposed action includes finding the project categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, *Existing Facilities*.

Applicant/ Property Owner: WH SN Mammoth, L.L.C.

**REQUESTING DEPARTMENT:**

**Community & Economic Development**

Nolan Bobroff, Acting Community and Economic Development Director

Gina Montecallo, Assistant Planner

**OBJECTIVE:**

1. Hear Staff and Applicant presentations
2. Planning & Economic Development Commission (PEDC) discussion
3. PEDC action to:
  - a. Adopt the attached Planning and Economic Development Commission Resolution (the Resolution), making the required Master Sign Program and CEQA findings, and approving Master Sign Program #MSP 23-001 with conditions as recommended by staff;
  - b. Adopt the Resolution with modifications; or
  - c. Deny the Resolution

**SUMMARY:**

Proposal:	The proposed Master Sign Program consists of a program that maintains continuity of quality and aesthetics throughout the Outbound Mammoth Hotel property and adheres to the regulations of the Clearwater Specific Plan (CSP) zoning designation, Chapter 5.2.10 "Signage".
Project Name:	Outbound Hotel Master Sign Program
Location:	164 Old Mammoth Road
Size of Property:	6.09 acres
Zoning:	Clearwater Specific Plan (CSP)
General Plan:	Clearwater Specific Plan

## KEY ISSUES:

1. Does the proposed project meet the Master Sign Program criteria and required findings pursuant to MC Sections 17.48.050?
2. Is the proposed project consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?

## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The subject site is the Outbound Hotel property, a roughly 6.09-acre complex located in the Clearwater Specific Plan (CSP) zone.

The Clearwater Specific Plan (CSP) was adopted by the Town of Mammoth Lakes in January 2009, and amended in April 2010 and August 2016, for the development of a new, pedestrian oriented, mixed-use, resort destination development located within the Old Mammoth Road District of the Town.

In September 2021, the Town received an application to amend the CSP, to allow for an interim development to be constructed at the project site while preserving the existing Specific Plan framework per the approved 2016 Old Mammoth Place CUP Amendment.

On December 1, 2021, the Town Council approved District Zoning Amendment (DZA) 21-001, which revised the Clearwater Specific Plan (CSP) to establish development standards for an Amended Phase One project. The interim development standards accommodate a less intensive expansion and upgrade of the hotel, restaurant, and public spaces than originally envisioned by the CSP/Old Mammoth Place entitlements while allowing for the future development of the Old Mammoth Place project consistent with the CSP's long-term vision and goals.

On February 9, 2022, the Planning and Economic Development Commission approved a Major Design Review and Use Permit application for the Sierra Nevada Resort redevelopment project. Along with the approved interim development, all existing Sierra Nevada Resort signs on the grounds would be replaced with new signs to reflect the new resort branding. A Master Sign Program is required pursuant to the CSP. The purpose of the proposed Master Sign Program is to implement the Clearwater Specific Plan, Design Guidelines, and the Town Municipal Code policies related to signage, community design and character, and to ensure that the architectural design of structures and their materials and colors are appropriate to the function of the project and visually harmonious with surrounding development.

The review and approval process for a Master Sign Program application is outlined in M.C. Section 17.48.050, which provides discretion to the PEDC to grant exceptions to the standards of this chapter for the maximum number and size of signs, based on site-specific conditions and design features including architectural style, building mass, and site visibility to ensure that signs for a uniquely planned or designed development area are most appropriate for that particular development or area. A Master Sign Program may also be more restrictive than the Sign Ordinance.

A Master Sign Program was approved on November 8, 2022; however, due to proposed changes to the approved sign designs as well as a name change from "Sierra Nevada Resort" to "Outbound Hotel," a new Master Sign Program application was submitted on November 28, 2023. Following review and discussions with the applicant, the amended Master Sign Program was scheduled for review by the Design Committee on January 4, 2024. The Design Committee provided consensus comments and recommended modifications to better meet the intent of The TOML Design Guidelines. The applicant team revised to design of the hotel arrival sign to respond to the ADP recommendations as described below:

- The forest green background color of the monument signage is reminiscent of the Forest Service style signage. The Design Committee would like to see a different background color.
- The secondary monument sign text should be raised or provide relief to satisfy the TOML zoning requirements.

- The monument sign should incorporate a natural rock base to provide a more cohesive appearance with the secondary monument sign.

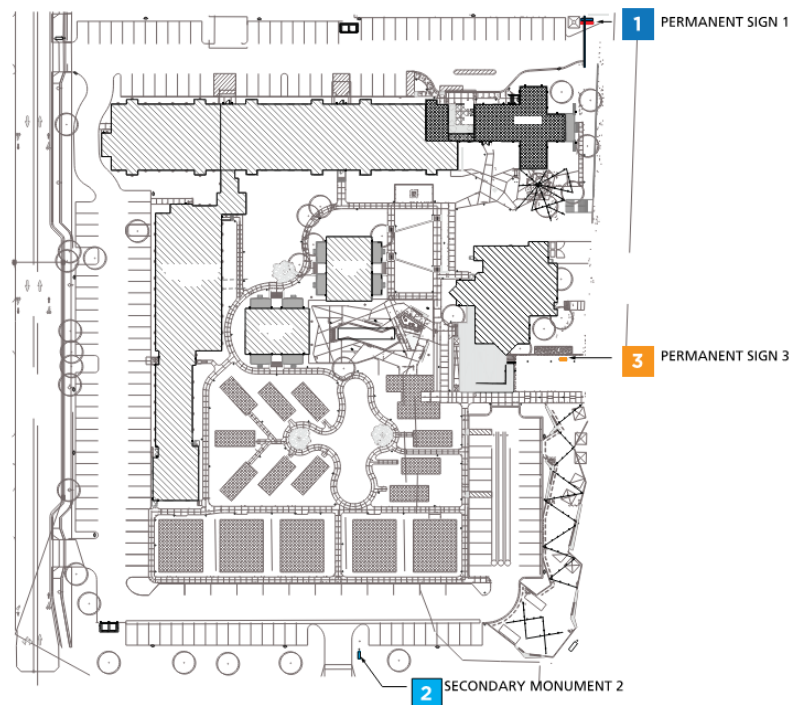
The Design Committee advised staff that an additional meeting would not be necessary if the applicant incorporated design changes that would adequately address the design deficiencies identified at the meeting. The applicant revised the project design in response to the Design Committee comments and staff received revised architectural plans on February 2, 2024. The changes to the plans adequately addressed the Design Committee recommendations so a second Design Committee meeting was not required (See **Attachment C** for the 1/4/24 DC Meeting Minutes).

### PROJECT PROPOSAL:

The proposed Master Sign Program (MSP) & Owner Sign Criteria was prepared for the purpose of maintaining continuity of quality and cohesive appearance throughout the resort property for the mutual benefit of all future owners and tenants, and to comply with the regulations of the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Mammoth Lakes, Chapter 17.48 "Signs." The Master Sign Program details the location, amount, general design, and maximum area for all new signs within the project site, including monument, wall, and restaurant signage.

The program proposes three primary signs for the site including the arrival monument sign, a secondary monument sign, and a restaurant monument sign. The arrival monument sign is located at the main entrance off Old Mammoth Road adjacent to the hotel lobby and includes the Outbound Hotel logo. The secondary monument sign is located on Sierra Nevada Road and signifies the secondary vehicular entry into the site. The secondary monument sign is a 4'-feet 9"-inch tall freestanding sign with a stone base. The final proposed sign is the restaurant monument sign which is specific to the new "Bar Sierra" establishment. The restaurant sign utilizes the original "Rafters" sign structure located along Old Mammoth Road adjacent to the restaurant, with modifications to tailor the design to the new Bar Sierra and Outbound Hotel branding. Details and renderings of each proposed sign and specific requirements to each sign can be found in **Attachment B: Master Sign Program and Sign Renderings**.

**FIGURE 1: SIGN LOCATIONS**



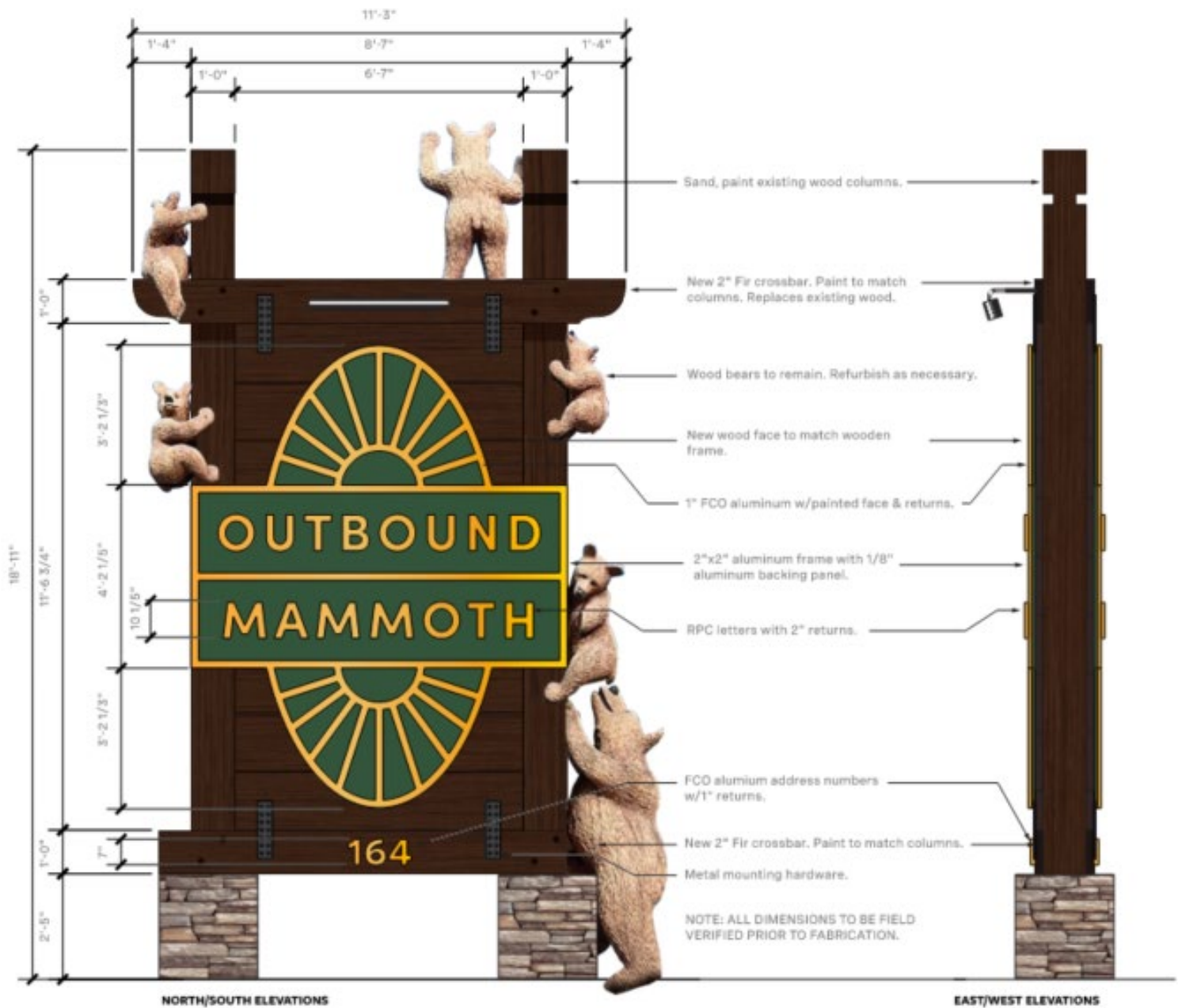


FIGURE 2: ARRIVAL MONUMENT

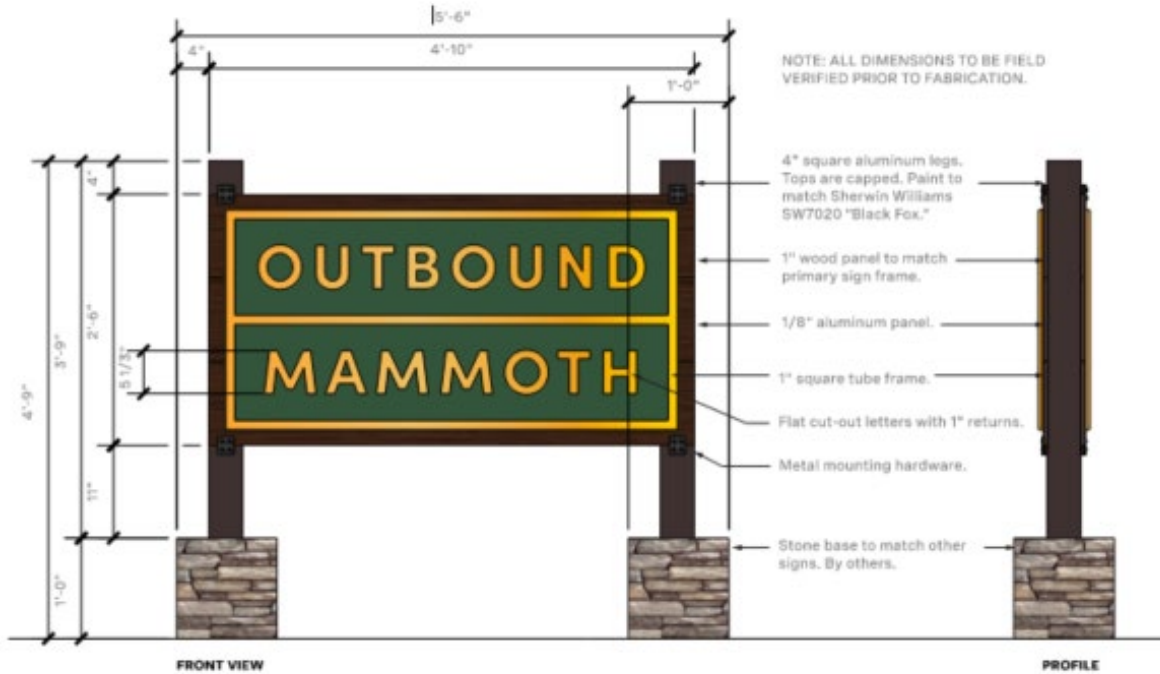


FIGURE 3: SECONDARY MONUMENT

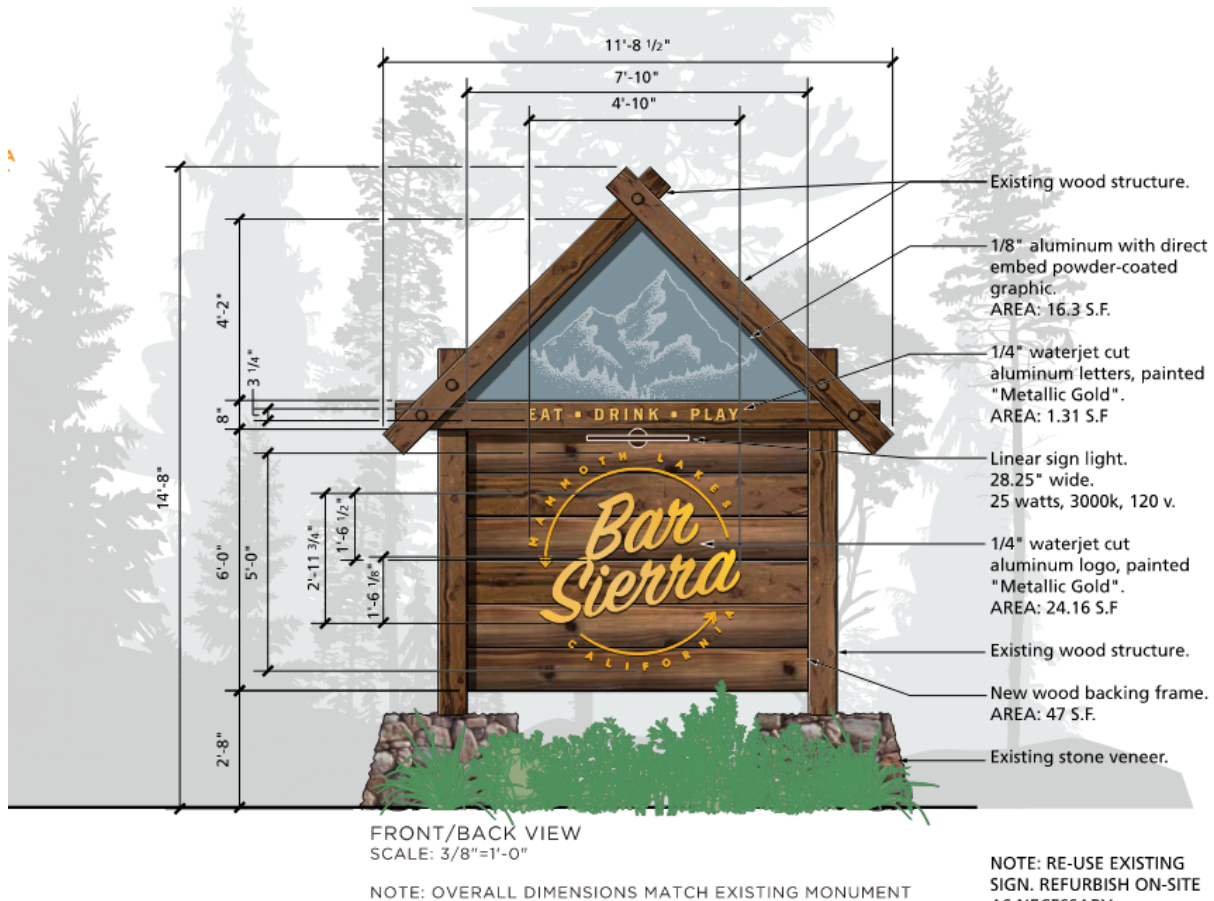


FIGURE 4: RESTAURANT SIGN



### Existing Site and Surrounding Land Uses

The 6.09-acre project site is located in the North Old Mammoth Road district and is bounded by Old Mammoth Road to the east, Laurel Mountain Road to the west, and Sierra Nevada Road to the south. The north property line abuts a residential condominium complex and a commercial mall.



**Figure 2: Aerial Image of Existing Site and Surrounding Area**

### Clearwater Specific Plan Consistency

The project is consistent with all applicable zoning requirements of the CSP.

The Master Sign Program achieves Design Objective 3.2.1 of the Clearwater Specific Plan, “Landscaping, signage, public art, street enhancements, and building design shall result in a more hospitable and attractive pedestrian environment” by ensuring that the proposed signs reflect the character of the development as well as the surrounding Old Mammoth Road zoning district through the use of materials and lighting, and by advertising the types of businesses that exist within the property in a clear and visually cohesive manner.

## II. ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

**Key Issue #1: Does the proposed project meet the Master Sign Program criteria and required findings pursuant to MC Sections 17.48.050?**

**A Master Sign Program application may only be approved if the review authority finds that the application is consistent with the following Master Sign Program Criteria:**

*A. The Master Sign Program complies with the standards of Chapter 17.48 and any applicable specific plan or master plan.*

The Master Sign Plan regulates the size, number, location, and general design of new signs per the regulations stated in Chapter 17.48 (Signs), and thus, conforms to the Municipal Code. New signs will consist of individual letters or aluminum panels with powder coated letters attached to a stone or wood

structure. Signs will be located on the business frontages and vehicular entries and will be located outside of the minimum five-foot setback from the Town right-of-way. Sign lighting is designed to minimize light and glare on surrounding Town right-of-way areas with the use of shielded accent lighting.

The three monument signs are appropriate in the proposed locations because they identify two vehicular access points which are located on two separate street frontages, and the third monument sign identifies the restaurant building.

The arrival monument sign is 74 square feet, which exceeds the maximum permitted square footage of 30 square feet. However, because the sign is an existing nonconforming sign, and there are no alterations to the physical structure or support elements of the sign, per M.C. Code 17.48.120 – Nonconforming Signs, the arrival monument sign is permitted to remain on the property.

*B. The Master Sign Program is in substantial compliance with the Town's Design Guidelines; and*

The Master Sign Plan for the Outbound Hotel redevelopment project conforms to the Town Design Guidelines and is appropriate in the context of a mountain resort community. The proposed Master Sign Program provides for a cohesive appearance and image for Outbound Hotel grounds, which is essential in Mammoth Lake's tourist-based economy. The plan incorporates a combination of materials for each sign to provide a 3-dimensional finish as well as ensuring the materials are durable and easy to maintain. The use of natural materials such as wood and stone are appropriate in that the use of these materials reflect the local setting and resort character of Mammoth Lakes while powder-coated aluminum letters stand out to effectively advertise the businesses.

*C. The signs within the Master Sign Program are visually related to each other and to the structure and/or developments they identify.*

The Master Sign Program ensures the signs within the Outbound Hotel development share a common theme and help to reinforce the identity of the development. Through the use of consistent fonts and materials, both the arrival monument sign and the secondary monument sign are consistent. The restaurant sign uses a stone base to create a cohesive appearance with the other proposed signs, however the font and frame is unique to distinguish the restaurant business from the rest of the hotel and is inviting to the general public.

**KEY ISSUE #2: Is the proposed project consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?**

Staff has determined that the Project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15301, Existing Facilities. The Project qualifies for this exemption because the project complies with subsection (g), which exempts the installation and alteration of on- and off-premise signs.

None of the exceptions set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 are present, which would disqualify the project from using a categorical exemption. Therefore, since the project meets all the criteria pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, no additional environmental review is warranted or necessary and the CEQA exemption is appropriate.

No public comments were received regarding this application at the time this staff report was published.

### **III. STAFF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION**

Staff finds that the proposed project meets the applicable requirements and recommends that the Planning and Economic Development Commission adopt the Planning and Economic Development Commission Resolution, making the required CEQA and Master Sign Program findings, and approving Master Sign Program 23-001 with conditions as recommended by staff.

#### **Attachments**

Attachment A: Planning and Economic Development Commission Resolution

Exhibit A: MSP 23-001 Conditions of Approval

Attachment B: Master Sign Program and Sign Renderings

Attachment C: January 4, 2024 PCDC Meeting Minutes