

March 23, 2016

SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY Sign Program Requested Sign Exceptions

The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History is in the process of developing a campus Sign Program to improve visitor circulation and access. Three exceptions are requested to the City Sign Regulations that allow:

- A total frontage sign area square footage over the allowable 90 square feet (for a commercial project with frontage over 100 linear feet)
- A total of five Pole Signs, and
- A total of nine Banner Signs

The specific location, description and request for each exception is described in further detail below and includes statements on the grounds for acceptance on the three required findings.

22.70.030 Sign Regulation

C. Prohibited Signs

Pole Signs

Definition

A pole sign is defined as any sign, other than a ground sign, supported by one or more uprights or braces on the ground, the height of which is greater than a [5'] ground sign, and which is not a part of any building or structure other than a structure erected solely for the purpose of supporting a sign.

Proposed pole signs:

- 2 new pole signs in parking lot (these are also banner signs)
- 1 new pole sign at new pathway/wall opening near access to the main entry to the Museum, to match existing pole sign
- 1 existing pole sign panel replacement at the main entry on Puesta del Sol (existing sign pole to remain)
- 1 new pole sign at the walking path intersection behind the main building.

Please refer to the sign inventory matrix and site plan for additional information.

Parking Lot Wayfinding Needed

Communicating wayfinding information to visitors arriving on-foot and by vehicle in the parking area requires that sign messages are placed high enough to be seen over the height of cars, SUVs and vans. The most efficient and least visually intrusive means to achieve this goal is to use a pole sign and place the message above the seven-foot height line so the signage is visible above the height of most vehicles. The proposed pole signs are designed and placed to be visible primarily from within the site. While the signage and pole located nearest the entrance will be visible from the street, the sign panel (or banner portion, see below) will be seen mainly from the parking area and walking routes and is small enough in height and dimension that it would not impair the semi-rural quality of streetscape.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History has a unique arrival sequence. Visitors must make three turns on residential roads into the parking lot without ever passing the Museum entry. This sequence leaves many visitors unsure as to the location and pathway to the Museum entrance. On busy days when visitors must park deep in the lot, far from the entrance, the two new pole signs will help reorient and direct visitors to the main entrance. The signs are designed with relatively brief directional messages to minimize sign size. Use of two pole signs in the parking lot with 2-1/2' and 3' height banners (see banner sign discussion below) significantly reduces the sign clutter that would result from the employment



of ground-mounted signs. Because of parked vehicles, it is estimated that at least 5-7 ground-mounted signs would be required in lieu of the 2 pole mounted signs and many of those would be ineffectual at night without additional lighting. The area of the ground signs would be approximately four times larger than the proposed pole signs and would still not be visible from most viewpoints over the parked cars.

Existing Museum Entry Sign Needs to be Maintained and Updated to Identify the Main Entrance

A small pole sign with a wood sign placard currently exists on Puesta del Sol adjacent to the main entrance. The Museum proposes to retain the existing post and replace the existing sign panel with a smaller sandblasted wood panel. Another sign of the same type and dimension will be located next to the entrance pathway and entrance plaza adjacent to Fleischmann Auditorium. The use of the same type of signage in and adjacent to wall openings to the Museum historic front door ensures visual consistency reduces apparent sign clutter and better relates to reducing sign variety, thereby enhancing the historic character of the site.

Pathway Wayfinding at Back of Main Building

A single 'village-style' pointer pole sign is proposed for the pedestrian pathway intersection located off the southwest corner of the main building assembly. This pointer-format sign is the least visually obtrusive method of directing visitors to many Museum destinations. Using conventional ground-mounted signs would necessitate two or more signs to convey the same information, which would increase visual clutter.

None of the new pole signs will be visible from neighboring private residences and the only pole sign visible from the public street will be the existing post style sign adjacent to the Museum entry. The two proposed directional banners on poles in the parking lot have been reduced in size since the previous HLC review - they are now half the size of the banners previously shown.

Grounds for Request/Findings:

1. There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved, or to the intended use of the property, that do not apply generally to other properties in the vicinity.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History is a cultural institution categorized as a commercial use operating under a CUP in a residential zone district and neighborhood. The Sign Program requirements for commercial properties are generally intended for properties that have multiple tenants and not those that are a single commercial use (or Institutional use). Moreover, the proposed pole signs will ultimately reduce overall sign clutter by reducing the number of proposed signs at the Museum. . Without the requested five pole signs, approximately 9-12 ground-mounted signs would be needed.

2. The granting of the exception will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity.

Granting of the requested exception will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity as this site is unique in its location and placement of the proposed pole signs are located on site and minimally visible beyond the site.

3. The proposed sign is in conformance with the stated purpose and intent of the Sign Ordinance.

The intended purpose of the Sign Ordinance is "to protect and enhance the City's historic and residential character and its economic base through the provision of appropriate and aesthetic signing. It is the intent of the City to limit the size, type, and location of signs in order to minimize their distracting effort on drivers and thereby improving traffic safety". The requested pole signs are in the spirit and intent of the ordinance and are sited in appropriate locations on site. The use

of pole signs reduces the amount of additional ground mounted signs, reducing sign clutter and minimizing distracting signage that would otherwise need to be located on the ground and frontage. The pole signs are modest in number, height and dimension to reduce impacts to the semi-rural setting of Mission Canyon and the surrounding cultural landscape. This is accomplished through appropriate design, materials and placement - i.e. materials are within the vocabulary of the campus and its surroundings, colors are sympathetic to the rural surroundings and signs have been placed to minimize the visibility from public thoroughfares.

22.70.030 Sign Regulation

C. Prohibited Signs

Banner Signs

Definition

Banner signs are defined as a bunting or other flexible sign characteristically supported at two or more points and hung on a building or otherwise suspended down or along its face, or across any public street of the City. A banner may or may not include copy of other graphic symbols.

Proposed banner signs:

- 2 within parking/walking areas that are also pole signs (see above Pole Sign Section)
- 2 changeable exhibition/promotional banners attached to the building wall (included in square footage area maximum).
- 5 corridor hanging gallery identification banner 'signs.'

The Convention of Museum Banners

Fabric-based banners informing the public about exhibitions are a staple for museums around the world and in Santa Barbara – they are, in addition to the signage over the main entrance, the only exterior elements that quickly communicate that this is a cultural institution, not a private estate, and exhibits and events of cultural/educational importance to the Santa Barbara region are happening here. To enhance its viability as a visitor-based institution, it is critical to periodically communicate a sense of new and changing exhibitions on the exterior of the building. The two proposed promotional banners would have minimal physical impact on the building. A banner system allows for a simple solution where information can easily be changed and updated throughout the year. Because the Museum is sensitive to its semi-rural setting and neighborhood these banners are considerably smaller than those used at other museums in the Santa Barbara area and about the smallest standard size available for this type of use.

The banners help the Museum to convey its ongoing mission to educate residents and visitors on natural history on a local, regional, national and international level. Because the Museum is sensitive to its location both in terms of the natural environment and surrounding neighborhood the promotional banners will be visible only from the public street, and not from any residences.

Hanging Gallery Identification Sign Banners

As an alternative to installing heavy rigid signs to identify the exhibit galleries, lightweight canvas banner 'signs' will be suspended from the exposed overhead structure in the corridors. This approach has the least impact on the building's architecture and will appear as a light, unobtrusive form. It also allows the Museum the flexibility needed to highlight the changing content of its exhibit halls over time, which is part of the Museum's updated mission statement. These banners will not be visible from outside the building.

Grounds for Request/Findings:

1. There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved, or to the intended use of the property, that do not apply generally to other properties in the vicinity.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History is a commercial use operating under a CUP in a residential zone district and neighborhood. The Sign Program requirements for commercial properties generally are created for properties with multiple tenants and not those that are a single commercial (or Institutional) use). In order to function as a viable cultural institution for visitors and local residents, these banners are necessary to convey important wayfinding and educational information.

2. The granting of the exception will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity.

Granting of the requested exception will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity as this site is unique in its location, configuration and roadway approach and careful consideration has been given to the size, placement of the proposed signage to ensure it is contextual in design, location and appearance with the surrounding natural environment and the semi-rural character of Mission Canyon and its residential neighborhoods.

3. The proposed sign is in conformance with the stated purpose and intent of the Sign Ordinance.

The intended purpose of the Sign Ordinance is "to protect and enhance the City's historic and residential character and its economic base through the provision of appropriate and aesthetic signing. It is the intent of the City to limit the size, type, and location of signs in order to minimize their distracting effort on drivers and thereby improving traffic safety". The requested banners are in the spirit and intent of the ordinance and are sited in appropriate locations on the building. The signage has been redesigned to be contextual with the semi-rural landscape through the use of appropriate materials and colors and are dimensioned and placed to minimize their visual impact to historic buildings, landscape and the streetscape. Moreover, they have been restricted to only 2 locations to ensure they do not visually impact their surroundings.

22.70.040 Sign Standards

A. General Requirement

3. Commercial and Industrial Uses

Square Area Maximum

Definition

City Sign Standards for Commercial Uses require that the total area for all signs identifying a business shall not exceed 90 square feet (for a dominant building frontage with more than one hundred linear feet)

Signs to be installed in the frontage include:

- 1 Main ID sign outside of parking lot = 15.6 SF (at the street)
- 1 Vehicular directional outside of parking lot = 13.1 SF (at the street)
- 1 replacement Museum Main ID at near Museum entry = 2.8 SF (at the street)
- 1 Museum Main ID at the new opening in the historic walk near the Museum entry = 2.8 SF (setback 34' and perpendicular from the street)
- 2 promotional banners = 54 SF total (setback 58' from the street)
- Existing Museum lettering above the Museum front door = 15.2 SF

The 90 sq.ft. maximum sign area may be adequate for conventional buildings or storefronts, but unlike an in-line straight-front property, the Museum has a particularly challenging access and orientation configuration requiring several signs to welcome and direct visitors. Drivers need to make three turns from Mission Canyon Road just to reach the Museum parking area, while still not having a clear idea about the path of travel to the main entrance. The L-shaped site with parking set well west of the somewhat obscure main entrance off of Puesta del Sol clearly requires a sequence of wayfinding signage to identify both the

parking and main visitor entrances as well as to direct walkers from the neighborhood and parking area to the entrance. The proposed sign program uses the minimum signage necessary to meet this goal.

The Museum has approximately 150 linear feet of Puesta del Sol frontage adjacent to the parking lot and 432 linear feet directly in front of the Museum buildings, for a total frontage of 582 feet and can easily and gracefully accommodate the 7 proposed signs, **totaling 103.5 sq.ft.**

No frontage signage will be visible from any neighboring private residences.

Grounds for Request/Findings:

1. There are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved, or to the intended use of the property, that do not apply generally to other properties in the vicinity.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History educational non-profit classified as a commercial use operating under a CUP in a residential zone district and neighborhood. The Sign Program requirements for commercial properties generally are intended for properties that have multiple tenants and not those that are a single commercial (or Institutional) use. In order to function, the Museum needs signs that welcome, and direct motorists to the parking area and then to direct pedestrians to the Museum entrance. The signs will actually minimize vehicular traffic in the area by helping drivers get parked.

2. The granting of the exception will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity.

*The quantity and total square footage of signage will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to adjacent properties. The request is for only an additional **13.5 sq.ft.**, very little given the 582 feet of Museum street frontage.*

3. The proposed sign is in conformance with the stated purpose and intent of the Sign Ordinance.

The intended purpose of the Sign Ordinance is "to protect and enhance the City's historic and residential character and its economic base through the provision of appropriate and aesthetic signing. It is the intent of the City to limit the size, type, and location of signs in order to minimize their distracting effort on drivers and thereby improving traffic safety". The requested square footage of signage is in the spirit and intent of the ordinance and is the bare minimum of signage necessary to function.

In conclusion, the Museum signage has been planned, located, and designed as a comprehensive sign program and is in the spirit of the sign ordinance and EPV guidelines. The signs are minimal in quantity and scale and designed to fit into the historic neighborhood.