

**EL DORADO COUNTY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**



Agenda of: July 9, 2009
Item No.: 7
Staff: Jonathan Fong

SPECIAL USE PERMIT

FILE NUMBER: S09-0003/El Dorado Hills CSD LED Reader Board Sign

APPLICANT: El Dorado Hills Community Services District (CSD)/Sandi Kukkola

PROPERTY OWNER: El Dorado Hills CSD

REQUEST: Revision to an approved Special Use Permit to allow an LED reader board sign for the El Dorado Hills CSD Community Park at the intersection of El Dorado Hills Blvd and Harvard Way.

LOCATION: At the intersection of El Dorado Hills Boulevard and Harvard Way in the El Dorado Hills area, Supervisorial District I (Exhibit A).

APN: 125-110-09 (Exhibit B)

PARCEL SIZE: 39.5-acres

GENERAL PLAN: Public Facilities (PF) (Exhibit C)

ZONING: Recreational Facilities (RF) (Exhibit D)

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT: Exempt pursuant to Section 15270(a) of the CEQA Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION: Planning Services recommends the Planning Commission take the following actions:

- 1) Certify the project is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15270(a) of the CEQA Guidelines; and
- 2) Deny S09-0003 since the required findings cannot be made.

BACKGROUND: The El Dorado Hills CSD Community Park was originally approved under Special Use Permit S87-0054. The park was expanded through subsequent revisions approved as Special Use Permit S03-0005 and S03-0005-R. No permanent signage was approved for the park site. The current Special Use Permit application S09-0003 would only address the proposed LED readerboard sign.

To date, the County has not permitted any LED reader board signs. Existing reader boards have either been installed without permit or have been outside County permitting jurisdiction. Zoning Ordinance Sections 17.16.070 *Lighting*, and 17.16.080 *Moving signs prohibited* have been cited as being the regulations that LED reader boards come into conflict. By design and function, a reader board provides for illuminated copy where the copy itself is the illumination, as opposed to illuminating a sign either externally or internally. And, since the copy changes or “moves,” the sign is interpreted to be a moving sign.

STAFF ANALYSIS: Staff has reviewed the project for compliance with the County’s regulations and requirements. An analysis of the Special Use Permit Revision request and issues for Planning Commission consideration are provided in the following sections.

Project Description: The Special Use Permit request would allow the construction of a new free standing LED reader board sign. The sign would be constructed within a decorative stone veneer cabinet monument. The overall sign would be 4’11” in height and 11’8” in length. The sign would allow for an overall sign area of approximately 20 square feet. The El Dorado Hills CSD logo would be permanently included within the stone veneer portion of the sign (Exhibit E).

The proposed reader board sign would utilize monochromatic LED’s and would allow for a maximum of four lines of sign copy. The LED’s would be amber or red in color, they have been specifically designed with high display resolution. The LED’s would be visible in direct sunlight. The sign would be programmable and would allow for changeable copy. The signage would be maintained by CSD staff located within the administrative building.

Following the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting, the applicant provided additional information regarding the project setting and proposed restrictions regarding message types and hours of operation (Exhibit I).

Site Description: The Community Park Facility encompasses a range of recreational facilities including park play areas, ball fields, aquatic center, ball courts, and administrative facilities. The approximately 40-acre site is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of El Dorado Hills Boulevard and Harvard Way. The T-intersection is signalized with ten street signals and five street lights atop typical light standards. Temporary banner signage is frequently located at the intersection within the County right-of-way along the walkway path in front of the park site. The purpose of the proposed LED sign would be to provide information regarding activities at the park facility and to eliminate the banners that are located on-site.

Adjacent Land Uses:

	Zoning	General Plan	Land Use/Improvements
Site	RF	PF	Existing EDH CSD Community Park
North	R1	HDR	Existing residential development
South	R1	HDR	Existing residential development
East	R1	HDR	Existing residential development
West	R1	HDR	Existing residential development

General Plan: The Community Park is designated Public Facilities (PF). The General Plan identifies the PF land use designation as appropriate for publicly owned lands for public facilities.

Policy 2.8.1.1 requires that development including signage be designed to reduce excessive nighttime light. The proposed LED reader board sign would utilize exposed LED's which have the potential to be significant sources of excessive light. Based on this General Plan Policy, the County has prohibited all signage which utilizes exposed LED's.

Policy 2.2.5.20 requires that all development projects be designed to avoid incompatibility with the surrounding land uses. The proposed reader board sign would result in additional light and glare as a result of the exposed LED's. The signage would be located along El Dorado Hills Boulevard and would be directly adjacent to existing residential land uses. The potential source of light glare would create incompatibilities with the residential land uses and would result in traffic hazards for motorists along El Dorado Hills Boulevard. The sign has been specifically designed to provide highly visible outdoor advertising along the local streets, with a high display resolution to grab motorists' attention.

Therefore staff finds the proposed sign would be inconsistent with the General Plan.

Zoning/Special Use Permit: The CSD Park Site is designated as Recreational Facilities (RF) which permits the existing CSD Park Site subject to approval of a Special Use Permit. Section 17.48.050 of the Zoning Ordinance permits one unlighted sign not to exceed 12 feet in height and a maximum sign area of 16 square feet.

The proposed signage would exceed the maximum sign area provisions of the Zoning Ordinance which would require approval of a Special Use Permit. In addition, the proposed exposed LED design does not comply with the Zoning Ordinance signage requirements.

Section 17.16.070 prohibits any lighting as part of signage that has the potential to create objectionable glare or impairment for vehicular traffic. Section 17.16.080 of the Ordinance prohibits signs which are moveable.

El Dorado County policy has been to prohibit the installation of these signs as they have the potential to create objectionable glare and are moveable which would be inconsistent with the

Zoning Sections listed above. The ‘Signage Building Permit Application Checklist’ includes the provision that LED and moving signs are not allowed within the County.

As discussed, staff has determined the proposed sign would not be consistent with the County Code.

AGENCY/ PUBLIC COMMENTS:

El Dorado Hills Area Planning Advisory Committee (APAC): APAC reviewed the proposed signage and issued a split decision 4-4. Comments received from the El Dorado Hills Area Planning Advisory Committee (Letter dated February 12, 2009), stated that “agencies...as well as non-profit organizations (churches) have a desire to inform the community of key matters/events happening locally that could positively influence their safety, health or overall well being.” A sign used for dissemination of information or advertisement in addition to identification of authorized uses on the premises is an off-premises sign or “billboard” and may be established by special use permit in accordance with Section 17.16.120. As this is a residential zone, an off-premises sign would be considered an incompatible use. Comments for approval and denial have been included as an Attachment to the Staff Report (Exhibit G).

El Dorado Hills Design Review Committee (DRC): The DRC reviewed the proposed signage and has recommended approval and provided comments which have been included as an Attachment to the Staff Report (Exhibit H).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Section 15270 (a) of the CEQA Guidelines establishes that no environmental review is required for projects which are disapproved. Therefore, the project is exempt from the provisions of CEQA and no further action is necessary.

SUPPORT INFORMATION

Attachment 1Findings of Denial

Exhibit A.....Vicinity

Exhibit BAssessor’s Parcel Map

Exhibit CGeneral Plan Land Use Map

Exhibit D.....Zoning Map

Exhibit EProposed Sign Elevations

Exhibit F.....Site Plan

Exhibit G.....EDH APAC Comments

Exhibit H.....EDH DRC Comments

Exhibit IEDH CSD Signage Details

ATTACHMENT 1

FINDINGS of DENIAL

Special Use Permit S09-0003 El Dorado Hills CSD Readerboard Sign

Planning Commission/July 9, 2009

The Special Use Permit is denied based on the following findings:

1.0 CEQA FINDING

- 1.1 Pursuant to Section 15270(a) of the CEQA Guidelines, projects which are disapproved are exempt from the provisions of CEQA and no further environmental review is required.

2.0 SPECIAL USE PERMIT FINDINGS

2.1 The issuance of the permit is not consistent with the General Plan;

General Plan Policy 2.8.1.1 requires that new development limit excessive nighttime glare. LED readerboard signage is not permitted within the County as they have the may expose motorists and nearby residents to potentially significant glare. The potential light and glare would be incompatible with surrounding uses and would be inconsistent with Policy 2.2.5.20 which requires new development to be compatible with surrounding land uses.

2.2 The proposed use would be detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare, or injurious to the neighborhood;

The ability for LED readerboard signs to produce changeable sign copy and varying intensity would distract motorists and nearby residents. The potential to create a vehicular hazard would pose a safety hazard along El Dorado Hills Boulevard and Harvard Way.

2.3 The proposed use is not specifically permitted by a special use permit pursuant to this Title.

Sections 17.16.070 and 17.16.080 of the County Code prohibit signage which has the potential to produce objectionable glare and has the potential to be movable. The proposed LED reader board sign utilized exposed LED's and has the ability to produce moveable images which is not consistent with the County Code.