

**CITY OF CARPINTERIA  
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD  
Meeting of June 17, 2010**

*Agenda Item #2*

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
PROJECT REVIEW**

**Project:** 10-1547-CUP/DPM: Albertsons Expansion **Planner:** Steve Goggia  
**Address:** 1012 & 1018 Casitas Pass  
**APNs:** 001-070-063  
**Zoning:** Commercial Planned Development (CPD)  
**Applicant:** Kent Heasley, Albertsons, Inc.

**Project Review:**  Conceptual  
 Preliminary  
 Final

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This is the preliminary review of a request to expand the existing Albertsons store into the former Rite Aid tenant space. The floor area of Albertsons would expand from 18,850 square feet to 40,290 square feet. The existing Albertsons entry/exit would remain, with a new secondary entry/exit to the east. One canopy would be used to form a single tenant identity and provide pedestrian shelter. New architectural elements integrated into the existing canopy over the main entry would provide a wind screen while additionally screening shopping carts, vending machines and outdoor sales areas. Planters would be installed along the building frontage. Shopping carts would be retrofit to work with the current locking cart system operated by CVS in this shopping center.

New cement plaster would reface the main building wall forming the inner edge of the arcade, with new expanded storefront glazing and glazed automatic sliding doors. Vending machines, newspaper racks and public telephones along this wall would be eliminated. A screened shopping cart storage area is designed into the arcade which incorporates outdoor seating, potted plants and expanded bicycle parking.

In keeping with the proposed improvements at Albertsons, two new façade elements at Building A (housing 10 retail spaces) and three new façade elements at Building B (CVS Pharmacy) would be installed. Improvements in the parking area include a lighted pedestrian path from Casitas Pass Road through the parking lot to the shopping center buildings. On-site parking spaces would be increased from 436 to 447 spaces by revising the parking layout and landscape islands in the northwest portion of the parking lot and adjusting parking and landscape islands in the main parking area. All parking lot lighting would be replaced. Other improvements include re-grading and replacing the walkway and paving in the area northwest of the former Rite Aid entrance to accommodate the change in floor level within the store and site drainage improvements to implement storm water Best Management Practices.

The proposed expanded store would be one of three grocery stores nationwide to collaborate with the Department of Energy in a "Net Zero Partnership." This partnership would result in a design that consumes 30% less energy than other stores. The proposal includes LED lights throughout the store, refrigeration cases with "best in class" refrigeration systems to reduce Freon use, "best in class" HVAC systems and waste management/cardboard recycling.

The Overall Sign Plan for Casitas Plaza Shopping Center is also proposed to be modified. Proposed site signage includes a freestanding sign along the property line facing Highway 101, a monument sign at the Casitas Pass Road entrance and directional signage at the Carpinteria Avenue entrance. Albertsons and CVS are proposed to be the only tenants identified on both freeway and monument signs. In addition, general sign specifications reflect Albertsons' corporate blue color.

Plans are attached as Exhibit A. The proposed revisions to the Planned Sign Program are included in Exhibits B and C.

#### **PROJECT SETTING**

Albertsons and the former Rite Aid tenant space are located in the Casitas Plaza shopping center, at the north east corner of the Casitas Pass/Carpinteria Avenue intersection. Overall landscaping for the center had been reviewed by the ARB in July of 2007; some, but not all of the approved landscape improvements have been completed.

#### **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

##### **Project History**

In 2008 the City Council adopted an Ordinance that requires an expanded Conditional Use Permit process for retail uses greater than 20,000 square feet in size. The new code provisions also require applicants to obtain conceptual review by the ARB and the Planning Commission and/or City Council prior to submittal of the formal Conditional Use Permit application.

The ARB conceptually reviewed the proposal on December 17, 2009. Several members of the public spoke in favor of the expansion, although they also noted that upgrades were needed for the entire shopping center. In general the Boardmembers agreed with the public comments, adding that it would be desirable to have the whole center enhanced concurrent with the upgrades to Albertsons. The Board also indicated that as currently proposed, the new architectural features seemed too imposing and not in keeping with Carpinteria's beach town image.

Other comments expressed by the Board were that the entrance to the parking lot from Casitas Pass and the entrance to Albertsons needed to be more pedestrian friendly.

Shopping cart storage locations in the parking lot also need to be addressed. Additionally, the vending machines need to be removed or screened. Parking lot safety relative to circulation patterns, speed and lighting was also voiced as a concern. Minutes from the ARB meeting are included as Attachment E.

**Carpinteria Municipal Code**

The project would also be developed pursuant to Chapter 14.20, the Commercial Planned Development District (CPD) of the City's Zoning Code.

**Development Standards:**

Standard	Requirement/Allowance	Proposal
Building Height	30-foot maximum	Approx. 23 feet existing 29'-9" proposed
Landscape	Not less than 10% of the net area.	1.28% (5,000 sq. ft.) existing 1.77% (6,788 sq. ft.) proposed
Parking	No increase in floor area is proposed for the shopping center as a whole. The zone code would require 462 spaces for this property and the additional buildings on APN 001-070-49	436 spaces existing 447 proposed

**Additional Code Provisions:**

**14.20.120 Other:**

1. Except as otherwise specified, open storage of materials and equipment shall be permitted only when incidental to the permitted use and where the main structure is located on the front portion of the lot. Storage areas shall be shown on the plot plan. All outside storage shall be heavily screened.
2. All mechanical equipment, including heating and air conditioning units, and trash receptacle areas, shall be completely screened from surrounding properties by use of a wall or fence or shall be enclosed within a building.

While the Conceptual plans showed two seasonal sales areas in front of Albertsons' new architectural features, they have been eliminated in this current proposal. Given the size of the expanded store, staff intends to propose a condition that would restrict the open storage of seasonal sales items and bottled drinks outside the store. Existing vending machines would be removed from the open storefront wall and placed behind the architectural element at Albertsons' exit.

#### **14.58.100: Planned Sign Program regulations**

The purpose of the Planned Sign Program is to ensure comprehensively designed signage for certain commercial and industrial uses, and to provide for additional review by the Architectural Review Board. The following signs are allowed in a Planned Sign Program:

- Ground (monument) signs, not to exceed eighty square feet or eight feet in height, located in a landscaped area twice or more than the square footage of the sign. Ground signs for multitenant uses may not list individual tenants, only the name of the center or complex;
- Directory signs not exceeding an area of two square feet for each business;
- Projecting signs;
- Wall signs not exceeding eighty square feet;
- Freeway Monument Signs: One such sign per freeway frontage, except that monument signs may be prohibited where, because of the location or configuration of parcels, monument signs would create negative aesthetic impacts or conditions hazardous to pedestrians, motorists, or the public. Overall height measured from the average finished grade to the top of the enclosure shall not exceed twenty feet, not to exceed one hundred square feet per sign face. Maximum of two sign faces per sign;
- Freeway Wall Signs: One square foot per linear foot of freeway frontage, not to exceed one hundred square feet total; and
- Any other sign types approved by the Architectural Review Board. *Staff notes that the seven types of signs listed as prohibited (Section 14.58.050) are not among the other sign types that may be considered by the ARB.*

Sign Criteria for the Casitas Plaza shopping center was adopted by the ARB on September 11, 1996 and revised on February 17, 2000. The Criteria for the two structures located on parcel 001-070-048 (and not a part of this current review) was revised on April 4, 2007. The applicants have proposed several revisions to the approved Planned Sign Program as a part of this current application (Exhibits B and C). The revisions are proposed in the area referred to as Exhibit A to the Planned Sign Program, specifically the overall parking lot area and the area surrounding the two largest buildings running along the north and east property boundaries. Staff notes that some of the proposed revisions would not explicitly be allowed in a Planned Sign Program, although some could be permitted with an approved modification.

Pursuant to Section 14.58.110, a sign application may include a request for modification from the regulations set forth in the Sign Regulations. The ARB or Community Development Department may consider modifications if such modification is necessary to accommodate the objectives of the sign design standards, and if at least one of the following findings is made:

- Modification is required to render the sign more compatible with the color, material, shape, scale and style of its surroundings;
- Modification is required because the architectural features of a building or structure restrict signage placement and identification;
- Modification is required because the unique location of a business or use restricts signage placement and identification;
- Modification is required to preserve a significant environmental, architectural, neighborhood thematic or historical element;
- Negative aesthetic impacts as determined by the Architectural Review Board or Community Development Department are insignificant or outweighed by the public interest.

Staff notes that as some of the Sign Criteria text revisions appear to be in conflict with the proposed signs as depicted graphically, the following analysis will be based on the sign graphics. The text document can be later revised to reflect the approved signs.

The Albertsons and CVS/pharmacy signs located on the building above the entries are proposed to be LED illuminated letters with the signs measuring approximately 72 square feet each. These signs would be allowed pursuant to a revised Planned Sign Program.

The three future secondary sign locations shown on the Albertsons storefront could be found consistent with the revised Planned Sign Program, although the project will be conditioned to return to the ARB for final review of the signs proposed for these locations before they are installed.

The two new architectural elements on Building A (parallel with the north property line) include three new locations for tenant signage that could also be found consistent with the revised Planned Sign Program. Staff notes however that the three new sign locations do not line up with the existing signs placed to center over each tenant's entry. **The Board's comments on the approach to allow wall signs in the locations shown would be appreciated.**

A 25-foot tall pole sign is proposed along the northern property boundary (Sign B). This pole sign is prohibited and would not be allowed even if the findings for a modification to the Planned Sign Program could be made. **Staff notes that a freeway monument sign or an additional freeway wall sign could be approved along the northern property boundary as an**

**alternative. Of these sign types, staff could support the additional freeway wall sign. A freeway monument sign, even if kept to 20 feet in overall height, would not be consistent with the small beach town image important to the City. Staff would like the Board to provide comments regarding freeway signage at this location.**

The proposed monument sign (Sign C) would replace the existing Casitas Plaza sign positioned in the landscaped planter along Casitas Pass Road. Consistent with the Planned Sign Program regulations, the existing sign only identifies the Casitas Plaza, and not individual tenants. The proposal to include Albertsons and CVS/Pharmacy would require that at least one of the findings above be made. Staff cannot support this modification as it would be difficult to make any of the identified findings. The applicant believes that because the two major tenants are located approximately 450 feet from Casitas Pass Road, they need additional signage. However staff disagrees as the large wall-mounted signs are allowed under the Planned Sign Program to address exactly this type of situation. The internally lit Albertsons and CVS/Pharmacy signs are clearly visible from Casitas Pass Road. **The Board's comments on a sign modification to allow individual tenants to be identified on the Casitas Pass Road monument sign would be appreciated.**

The proposed directional sign (Sign D) located in the planter at the Carpinteria Avenue entrance functions as a monument sign. **Staff would prefer to see a sign smaller in scale, yet similar in construction to the proposed monument sign. As with the Casitas Pass Road monument sign, staff supports a sign identifying the Casitas Plaza shopping center in this location for the reasons cited above. The Board's comments on this proposal would also be appreciated.**

#### **General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan**

**Community Design Element Objective CD-1:** *The size, scale and form of buildings, and their placement on a parcel should be compatible with adjacent and nearby properties, and with the dominant neighborhood or district development pattern.*

**Community Design Element Objective CD-2:** *Architectural designs based on historic regional building types should be encouraged to preserve and enhance the unique character of the city.*

**Community Design Element Objective CD-7:** *Enhance and maintain the Linden Avenue downtown core, the Carpinteria Avenue commercial core, the Eugenia Professional office area, the Casitas Village, Shepard's place Shopping Center, and the Cindy Lane-Mark Avenue industrial park districts.*

**Policy CD-7a:** *Retail and commercial uses should generally have large transparent "storefront" windows for display of merchandise to pedestrians. Blank sections of walls on street frontages are strongly discouraged.*

Responding to comments made by the ARB conceptual review, the proposal now includes additional architectural elements located on both buildings to update the facades and tie the improvements proposed by Albertsons to the entire shopping center. The architectural features have also been scaled back in size in order to better keep with Carpinteria's small beach town image. **The Board's comments on the proposed style, detailing and placement of the architectural features would be appreciated.**

Staff is concerned with the proposal to use translucent graphics with the aluminum storefront at Albertsons' exit. While the graphics could hide the back of the vending machines and propane sales racks, it is not in keeping with the desire to provide transparent storefront windows providing visual access into the store. Any graphic this large would appear to be out of place with the City's small beach town image. **The Board's comments on this proposal would also be appreciated.**

**Policy CD-7b:** *Buildings should be designed to incorporate signs that conform to the city's sign ordinance. Signs should be integrated with building architecture and adequately identify businesses. Freestanding monument signs are discouraged.*

The analysis of the proposed signs is in keeping with the policy directive to incorporate signs that conform to the City's sign ordinance.

**Community Design Element Objective CD-13:** *Ensure that lighting of new development is sensitive to the character and natural resources of the City and minimizes photopollution to the maximum extent feasible.*

**Policy CD-13b:** *Lighting shall be low intensity and located and designed so as to minimize direct view of light sources and diffusers and to minimize halo and spillover effects.*

**CD-13-Implementation Policy 6:** *Exterior lighting on commercial development shall be designed to compliment the building and shall be at the minimum height and intensity required to ensure public safety.*

**Community Design Element Objective CD-14:** *Protect and preserve natural resources by reducing energy consumption.*

**Policy CD-14a:** *To ensure the effective utilization of energy resources, design measures shall be incorporated into project design that allow for development projects to comply with and exceed the minimum energy requirements of the City's Uniform Codes.*

The existing parking lot lighting had been cited at the conceptual review as being inadequate. All parking lot lighting would be replaced. Cut sheets indicating the proposed light fixtures are included as Exhibit D. The architectural plan set includes a Site Lighting Photometrics Plan. **The Board's comments on the proposed lights would be appreciated.**